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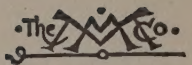

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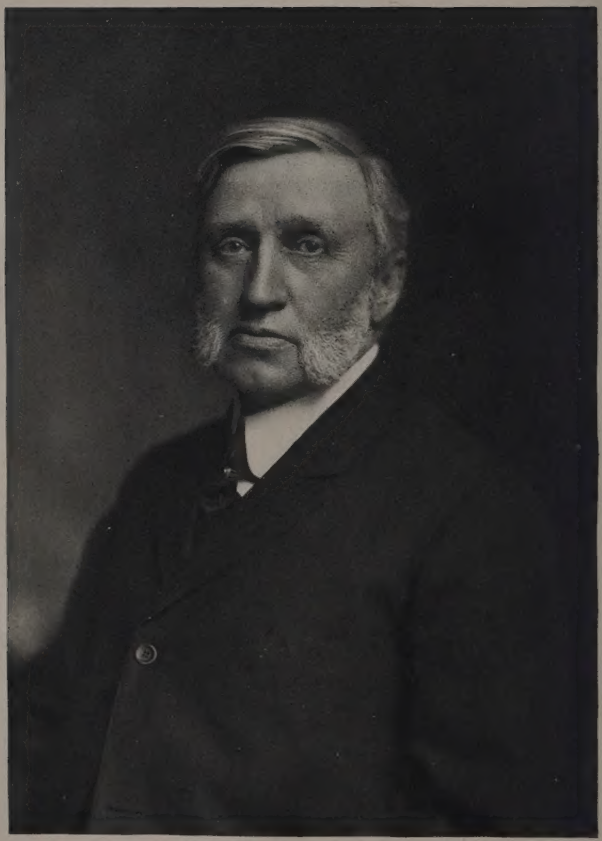
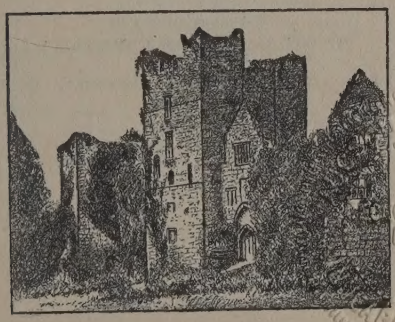


AN OLD CASTLE

AND OTHER ESSAYS

BY

C. T. WINCHESTER
LATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN
WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY



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Press of
J. J. Little & Ives Company
New York, U. S. A.

MEN LIVE AFTER THEIR DEATH,—THEY LIVE NOT ONLY IN THEIR WRITINGS OR THEIR CHRONICLED HISTORY, BUT STILL MORE IN THAT ἄγραφος μνήμη EXHIBITED IN A SCHOOL OF PUPILS WHO TRACE THEIR MORAL PARENTAGE TO THEM

NEWMAN

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PREFACE

Seldom is it the teacher's lot to have any of his work perpetuated in lasting literary form. But Professor Winchester's students will remember how the work in the classroom led up to finished summary lectures. They developed out of the rich autumn mould of his acquisitions, year after year,[1] and showed us best of all how thorough and thoughtful study had enabled him to "see into the life of things." In these talks to students lay the origins of the public lectures which charmed and enlightened a far more widely ranging audience. Even the latter, Professor Winchester rarely published. Therefore certain typical examples, representative both of his power as a teacher and his appeal as a lecturer, it has now seemed best to give to the world. "Art," once wrote their author, "is the only way the individual has of perpetuating his personality." In this way these papers are not alone of intrinsic value but fitly memorial.

Professor Winchester admirably illustrated his own ideal of a critic,—one who could "quicken your feeling for what is essential and characteristic in an author's work." Hundreds can testify to the success with which he did this in the lecture-room or through the printed page. The range of these essays indicates in some measure the catholicity of his taste and the scope of his powers of literary appreciation. He was always, I think, especially interested in the man behind the book. Interest in character and in the work as an index to character was what led him into a method of criticism pronouncedly biographical. It was because he

[1] The actual writing of them out Professor Winchester often did very quickly; he told the editor that the Shakespeare lecture he thought his best, the *Antony and Cleopatra,* was dashed off at one sitting of a single afternoon.

brought so broad and deep and wise an experience of life to his reading that he found so much there. Literature in turn increased his own understanding of human nature, and he made it the means of conveying that knowledge to others.

Vivid and dear memories flash into the minds of many of us as we read these pages. We see that dignified figure come quietly into the crowded lecture-hall to make Shakespeare or Wordsworth or Burns live for us as never before. Upon all of us in some way this man made an indelible impression. I myself shall never forget Professor Winchester's reading and interpretation of the *Ode to Duty*. He brought out the impressiveness of the truth it teaches with such hushing conviction. Another friend spoke of the way in which he handled his books, which was characteristic, and suggestive of his bearing toward literature in the large. For, being one of the most genuinely modest of men,—judicial as was his criticism,—he always approached great works of literature with a very winning kind of respect. The loving way in which he taught literature, in itself, opened many a man's eyes. As has been well said, "he taught his students to think while feeling, and to feel while thinking, and he taught them to love literature while teaching them to know it." And whatever his audience, he always made the individuals that composed it feel that they were one with him in knowledge, insight, and appreciation. Or perhaps our fondest memory may be of Professor Winchester in the seminar where his way of welcoming every man's point of view, and yet bringing all the wandering question and comment round to some definite conclusion in the end was a marvel of generalship in teaching. And how we came to watch for the glint of humor in his eye!—sign of a gift that kept his view of life wholesome, and enlivened many a page as well as many an hour. Or yet again we may best remember him as he conducted morning prayers at chapel, for religion was deep and essential in the man. He had the poet's love for beauty, and a sunniness of outlook upon life, but he had the poet's aspiration as well; he felt with distinguishing force "how near to good

is what is fair"; his predilection for Milton in *Comus,* for Wordsworth, Ruskin, Browning, was evidence of a trait in himself which made the desire of beauty lead to spiritual things.

More friends than any but the editor can realize have materially contributed toward the bringing out of this book. Of course it would never have been at all but for the generous devotion of her who was always nearest and dearest to him. We are especially fortunate in having the Introduction written by one whose peculiarly rich experience of life and fine cultural sense enabled him to place Professor Winchester among critics of literature, the more justly for being free of the bias of personal acquaintance. And collaboration has been far-reaching. It has extended all the way from former students who have helped in selection, colleagues, or professors in other colleges, who have given us the benefit of their advice or knowledge or service in proof-reading, even to utter strangers who have taken upon themselves irksome tasks merely out of sympathy with our endeavor. Professor Winchester's was just the spirit to appreciate such ministration of friendliness, and the book stands as witness to the generous aid and kindly co-operation of all. Let us inscribe it as it thus fitly goes forth fostered by manifold friendship:

To all those who were his students
in any sort
and are ever his friends.

Louis Bliss Gillet.

22 February, 1922.

NOTE

All the papers here collected are now printed for the first time except those on Ruskin, Clough, and Bronson Alcott. The latter are reprinted through the courtesy of the *Methodist Review,* where they appeared in the numbers for March 1900, September 1906, and July 1919, respectively. No manuscript has been found of Professor Winchester's earliest and repeatedly called for [1] lecture, *An Evening in London a Hundred Years Ago.* Fewer examples of his lectures on the writers between 1789 and 1832 have been included, though *Memories of the English Lakes* was among the most popular, because of his books dealing with this period, *Wordsworth: How to Know Him,* and *A Group of English Essayists.* A Bibliography of nearly all his published writings will be found in the *Memorial* issued by Wesleyan University in 1921, the year following his death. Of course none of the following papers, except the three previously printed, received the benefit of Professor Winchester's revision for publication. But they are perhaps as interesting in their present state since, being in practically the form in which they were delivered, they show in what pure English and in what a finished style it was natural for their author to speak. The vignette on the title-page is a miniature reproduction of an old crayon drawing of Ludlow Castle by Mrs. Winchester,—one of a set which in the early days illustrated, and, as Professor Winchester was fond of telling his friends, greatly increased the popularity of his lecture. The texts of the Cambridge Editions published by Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co. have been used for the longer quotations from the poets. A British custom of using

[1] Professor Winchester told the editor in 1908 that he supposed he had delivered the companion lecture, *An Old Castle,* three hundred times.

single quotation marks to indicate inexact or slightly appropriated quotations has been followed; and words and phrases that Professor Winchester in lecturing inserted for any reason into quoted texts are set off in brackets. The footnotes, unless signed by initials in brackets, are the author's own.

L. B. G.

INTRODUCTION

I am told that our Oxford Professor of English Literature, Sir Walter Raleigh, once said: "Of all the men I have met in America the most interesting was a man by the name of Winchester, from a place I never heard of called Wesleyan." I too had never heard of Winchester or Wesleyan till I was introduced to both through a friend during my first visit to America in 1920, about a month after Winchester's death.

"Interesting" is not the first epithet we generally apply to scholars or dons. Few teachers make even their teaching interesting. At all events, after the customary years in an English Public School and the greatest of our Universities, I remember only one who taught me anything interesting—anything vital, anything that touched my life. I suppose it is its effect upon life that is the test of teaching, and that is why the teacher is so much more important than the thing taught that the subject does not really matter in comparison. It is because so few Professors and dons have this influence upon life, or have even much intimacy with life, that so few are called interesting.

With distant but reverent admiration I think of the verbal scholar, the emendator of classic texts, the authority upon minute particles of speech, like the honoured corpse at the *Grammarian's Funeral,* of whom it was written,

> This man decided not to Live but Know.

By all means let us rejoice at assisting in a grammarian's funeral—the elevated funeral upon the mountain top. But for interest we must go to life—the life common to all who pass from darkness into darkness through this dimly torch-lit world.

It might be thought an easy matter to make the teaching of literature interesting; for literature is closely connected with life; more closely than language, and quite as closely as history. Yet I believe English literature to be just the most difficult of all subjects to teach. So far as merely getting knowledge into the pupils' heads goes, it is far easier to make them learn Euclid or arithmetic or the Greek verbs. About all literature there is something intangible and indefinite as compared with other studies like mathematics or physical science; and to an English-speaking student English literature appears so simple that it may be taken as a kind of relaxation, but I am old-fashioned and wise enough to know that good teaching draws a very sharp line between work and play. Besides, the teaching of most literature is inextricably complicated by an element which lurks in it as in all the arts, and can never be taught at all—the incalculable element of beauty. Everything else can be taught up to a certain point, either by sympathetic understanding or by the ancient method of cruelty. But no power on earth or in heaven can drive the perception of beauty into a head which has it not.

I once heard a lecturer begin by calling upon his audience "to join him in culling a few choice and fragrant flowers from the Shakespearian fields." Refusing to cull, I heard no more; for even to those who know what beauty is, a selection of beauties grows as tedious as a succession of anecdotes or jokes. If you get hold of a whole volume of *Punch,* you may think you are going to have a really good time, but within ten minutes you are bored so stiff that you long for *Paradise Lost* or the Differential Calculus or anything that is no joke. In the same way we soon sicken of special beauties that critics point out for our admiration, as Swinburne, for instance, sometimes did in his literary rhapsodies. That was not Professor Winchester's way. He presents us with no tempting tit-bits. He culls no pretty flowers. He does not pick the phrase, but leaves us to find it where it grew. Literature to him was no

collection of labeled specimens, but a living thing, bounteous as nature. In an address of 1919, he truly said (and in certain precious circles it would require some courage to say it),—"No really good literature was ever born of merely æsthetic impulse."

Some literary critics yield to another temptation—the temptation of running off into paradoxes and whimsies because the highroad of judgment seems so tame and well-trodden. One wasted part of genius so valuable to mankind in proving that the *Odyssey* was written by a girl, as though that mattered; another that Dante's Beatrice was a species of theology; another that Shakespeare wrote the *Sonnets* for fun or hire. A good many have wasted time (which, certainly, can have been of little value) in demonstrating that Bacon was Shakespeare, and a large number have set out to prove that one great writer is greater than another great writer, as though they could weigh genius by Apothecaries' Weight. From all these vagaries and mare's-nesting excursions Winchester was mercifully preserved by a certain "horse sense." Even Matthew Arnold was hardly a saner critic. He had no shrinking fear of sanity, no pernickety hesitation in permitting his judgment to coincide with the judgment of the "Orbis Terrarum." There are points in which I do not agree with him. I think he is inclined to insist too much upon the definitely moral teaching of great literature. In speaking of Antony and Cleopatra, for instance, I should not myself describe their relation as "sin." Their passion was too superb, their tragedy too overwhelming for the pulpit word. Again, I think Winchester too easily forgives Henry V for his callous betrayal of Falstaff, to me the greatest of all Shakespeare's creations. I do not agree that *As You Like It* is the best of the comedies. I doubt if it is a good acting comedy at all, though the charm of its language and of the characters enthralls us. Still less do I agree that Sterne is "sentimentalism incarnate." But these are small and possibly private objections. Almost without exception,

Winchester keeps the broad highway of judgment. "Securus judicat." It is proverbially difficult to give a personal and individual touch to widely accepted themes. "Difficile est proprie communia dicere."

Let us take two examples of his criticism to illustrate both his common sense and his individuality. It is obvious from all his work that he felt the keenest delight in the Elizabethan and nineteenth century poets. In them he found the emotion and the beauty of expression that he most required in literature. Yet, when we are confronted with the modern school which regards imagery alone as constituting poetry, and in reading a poet takes no account of the intention, design, or "architecture" of the poem, but marks only the lines of images, similes, metaphors, or picturesque words, how encouraging it is for us who believe that these beautiful things should be but the ornaments and decorations of a great structure to come upon such a passage as this:

> For my part, I should certainly prefer the poetry of the early nineteenth century to the poetry of the early eighteenth century; and yet, in these days when so much stress is laid upon the picturesque, the suggestive, or even the mere musical functions of poetry,—when Mr. Addington Symonds thinks Shelley has realized the miracle of "making words altogether detached from any meaning the substance of a new ethereal music,"—I say it is not altogether unpleasant to take up this old-fashioned verse whose first charm is clear and pithy meaning. And the matter of which this poetry is made up, if it be neither novel nor moving, has at least that first mark of classic literature, universality.

And when critics plague us with ecstasy over the beauties of "poetic prose," or try to carry us away upon the glory of rolling periods and sounding rhetoric, what a city of refuge from them we may find in this passage about prose style in the essay upon my own favorite writer, Jonathan Swift:

> Language to Swift was simply the vehicle of thought. No English writing better combines the three virtues of clearness, simplicity, vigor. "Proper words in proper places" is his curt definition

of style. Admiration for style apart from the meaning beneath it he would have considered the mark of mere literary preciosity,—as it usually is. It is true indeed that the greatest masters of modern prose have at their command felicities of arrangement and cadence, and a subtle use of the suggestive power of words, by means of which they can convey their thought not only with all its flexures of meaning but with all its delicate nimbus of emotion. But Swift needed no such niceties, for there was no subtlety or delicacy in his nature. Literary elaboration always seemed to him to imply artifice or pedantry.

This quiet good sense, as solid and assured as Johnson's own, lies at the foundation of Winchester's excellence as a critic. But, above that, rose his fine sympathy with noble emotion, and that incommunicable sense of beauty of which we spoke. He possessed by birth, and he retained, a passionate love of the best literature; and I think it must be hard to retain such a passion for the subject that a man teaches. Literature to him was part of life, or rather it was life itself as viewed in human thought. It was the description and interpretation, often the inspiration, of life. As he said in his speech at the dinner given in his honor less than a year before he died:

> Literature is the best thought that has been touched and vitalized with emotion and uttered in a manner of lasting charm. Thus defined, literature is obviously the best interpreter of life—the life of the individual man and the life of historical periods. For the temper of a man depends not merely nor principally upon what he thinks, but upon what he feels; the character of an age depends not merely upon its permanent intellectual qualities, but upon its dominant tone of feeling. It is not too much to say that if we wish to know any life outside the little circle of our own personal acquaintance, we must know it largely through books.

For literature under this definition his love, as I said, remained unshaken, in spite of all the weariness and repetition implied in a Professor's labor. His appreciation was inspired by an innate sense of beauty, and guided by an imperturbable sanity. By his historic imagination, as seen in *An Old Castle,* he was able to connect the literature of any age with its contemporary world, and by his wide

tolerance, in matters of ordinary behavior as well as in questions of literary taste (as seen in his essays upon Swift and Burns), he escaped the snares of seclusiveness and preciosity. But, above all, it was his insistance upon the unity of life with literature that gave his writing and his teaching their finest value. For these reasons I can well understand what a radiant experience it must have been for the young to come under his influence; and I can well understand what a mature scholar meant by calling him the most interesting man he had met in America.

HENRY W. NEVINSON.

London, Oct. 1, 1921.

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AN OLD CASTLE AND OTHER ESSAYS

AN OLD CASTLE

IN the west of England, just on the border of Wales, in a sweet and smiling landscape, where, to the east, far as the eye can reach, stretch green, rolling meadows broken by waving fields of yellow grain and fair-blooming orchards, with here and there a cottage or a manor-house "bosomed high in tufted trees," its blue wreath of evening smoke curling slowly up; and where, to the west, rise gentle hills green and smooth to the summit save now and then for a reach of noble forest, and, on the distant horizon, the dim blue outline of the mountains of Wales: in this lovely country lies, at the junction of the broad, shallow rivers Teme and Corve, the sleepy old town of Ludlow. It is not much visited by American sight-seers I take it, though few towns in England are better worth the seeing. The two rivers meet at an acute angle, and the town lies just within the angle. As you enter it from the railway and walk up its quaint and straggling main street, you find yourself slowly climbing a long hill. Halfway up you may stop for a bit of meat and drink at the Three Feathers, a delightfully old hostelry of the sixteenth century. Farther up, as you near the apex of the angle and the junction of the two rivers, almost at the top of the hill, is the venerable church of St. Lawrence; and a few rods farther, at the very top of the hill, and just at the junction of the rivers, where the steep bluff falls sheer down into the brawling stream below, there stands, noble though in ruin, the Old Castle of Ludlow.

The street of the town leads straight up to the castle

wall that bars your way. But in the great outer gate is now only an old oaken door, and that is invitingly open all day long. The outer court which you enter is now a broad, smooth lawn, enclosed on three sides by the low curtain walls over which the great beech trees hang their branches. But turning to the right, you face, on the fourth side, the towering wall of the great inner court, or castle proper. Passing over a bridge that spans the old moat, now filled with vines and climbing greenery, you pass through the high-arched gate, under the shadow of the great keep, the rusty teeth of the old portcullis grinning in their socket over you, and enter the inner court. You are in the Middle Ages. The little court of perhaps half an acre is bright and sunny, but there is a sullen stillness in the air, and the grim walls that shut in around you, keeping silent the secret of centuries, will throw a hush upon you as you enter their solemn circuit. Time has laid his hand but gently on this old castle. Its bold masses rise as they rose half a millennium ago, its grand outlines still entire, though softened a little here and there by the gradual touches of decay. Roofs are gone, and the floors are green turf now; ivy has mantled all one side of the court, and the whole is slowly yielding to the tooth of time. But you may still clamber down into the dungeons at the base of the great keep,—one of the oldest in England, for it was built only sixteen years after the Conquest, more than eight hundred years ago,—and then you can mount by broken stair from story to story till you emerge quite at the top and look out toward the sunny meadow a mile away that was once reddened by the blood of Bosworth battle; or you can pick your way through the mass of noble building on the opposite side of the court,—armories, state-apartments, banqueting hall,—clambering up to get a nearer view of some bit of quaint carving, or a glimpse of green landscape framed in some long, narrow window, or to come out now and then into some curious little bower, built in the thickness of the wall, lighted by a tiny slit in the gray stone, and just large enough for a lover, a lady, and a lute.

And when you have wearied yourself by your climbing among the ruins you may lie upon the sunny sward in the court and dream away a summer afternoon in mingled reminiscence and imagination of the scenes and the men these walls have looked upon. They could tell you many a story of early English history, of Walter Lacey and Arnold De Lisle and Maid Marian, of Edward III and his cruel mother, Isabella. During all the bloody Wars of the Roses the tide of varying battle surged around this castle, and the turf where you lie was stained again and again by the blood of the red and the white rose. In yonder rooms at the northeast corner lived for a time Edward IV's two sons, before they went up to London to meet that mysterious death in the Tower that every schoolboy has heard of. Hither came some years later sad-faced Catherine of Aragon from her royal parents, Ferdinand and Isabella; yonder tower where she lived for a few short months with her boy husband, Prince Arthur, is still called by her name. Pleasant hour of calm before the storm of her life: for when her husband died, you remember, she went from here to marry his brother, Henry VIII, and her divorce from him turned Europe upside down and made the English Church.

But the associations of Ludlow that are of most interest and on which I wish to linger are of yet a little later date. From 1559 till the close of the sixteenth century this castle was an official residence of a noble family which numbered in it some of the greatest names of England's greatest age, and whose list of personal acquaintance comprised almost that whole circle of statesmen, adventurers, and poets whose renown fills

> The spacious times of great Elizabeth
> With sounds that echo still.

Ludlow Castle was then the seat of the Lord President of Wales, to whom was entrusted a wide jurisdiction over the affairs of that country; and in 1559, shortly after Elizabeth came to the throne, she appointed to that office, Sir Henry

Sidney. Sidney and his son-in-law, Henry Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, held the office until 1601.

England from 1560 to 1600—what an age it was! We must try to realize it, if we would understand those men whose figures loom so vast upon the scene of history. Never before, perhaps, in the history of the world had fifty years wrought so great changes in any country as had been wrought for England during the fifty years before Henry Sidney took his place at Ludlow. The whole face of the country was changed. The feudal system had mostly passed away. Quiet and peaceful days had come at last. The old castles like this of Ludlow, that had been for four centuries the centers of battle and siege, ceased now to be fortresses any more and were turned into knightly palaces. It was the beginning of modern life, you see. The nobles no longer came to court with two-handed sword and shield, but in satin doublet and velvet cloak, laced with gold and sparkling with jewels. They builded themselves, says the old chronicler, Harrison, fair manor-houses of "brick or hard stone, . . . their rooms large and comelie, . . . so magnificent and statelie as the basest house of a baron doth often match in our dayes with some honors of princes in old time." Inside these fair and comely houses, though you would find only rushes under your feet as yet, there is gorgeous tapestry of Arras upon the walls, there is costly linen in the presses, there is abundance of silver and gold plate upon the board,—to the value, says old Harrison, of two thousand pounds at the least in any nobleman's house (equal, you know, to seventy-five thousand dollars nowadays). You sat in chairs, you sat at tables, whose carved richness and beauty are the despair of modern imitators; and you looked out over the green English country through windows of clear glass newly brought from Flanders or Normandy. And when your imagination can reproduce for you the vision of these noble old rooms, lighted with little diamond-paned windows, with the high, open-timbered roof overhead, the gray walls bright with tapestry and hung with armor, the floor strewn

with rushes, then, in this quaint setting, frame the glittering picture of the knights and ladies of those times. We have forgotten what dress is. The Puritans carried the day in this as in other matters. Perhaps it is as well; but how picturesque, what a thing of glittering beauty must have been the costume of that time! It is only on the canvas of a Titian or a Rubens that it lives any longer for us. You must think of the fine gentleman with a tight-fitting doublet of scarlet satin, embroidered with gold and slashed to show the rich laces underneath, a ruff at his neck, a cloak of white sables costing a thousand ducats, black trunk-hose covered with lace, rose-colored nether socks from Venice; velvet shoes of blue with rubies in the buckles, or perhaps boots with falling tops out of which gushed a cloud of lace in which you caught the glint of gems; in the hilt of his sword sparkles a great diamond, and all Arabia breathes as he passes by! Yet do not say this is the mere foppery of pusillanimous gallants. These men are the conquerors of the world, and next year mayhap will be parching with pestilence while fighting the Spaniard in the swamps of Central America, or dying of cold amid the snows of the polar sea. No, it is the joy and pride of life, the rich prodigality of power, the new sense of all the goodliness of this brave world that blossoms in this outward magnificence. What else were gold and jewels for? And of gold and jewels the land was full. When Francis Drake's ship, having harried the Spaniards in every water under the whole heaven, and flown like some swift secret thing around the world, at last came home to Plymouth Harbour, the little craft was laden down with treasures to the value of eight hundred thousand pounds sterling, or in the money of to-day at least twenty-five million dollars,—five dollars for every man, woman, and child in England. Think of that. And as to the dress of the ladies,—far be it from me to attempt to describe that: we know it kept well in advance of that of the gentlemen. Doesn't every school girl know that Queen Elizabeth had three thousand dresses in her wardrobe, and have we not all in mind that well-

known picture in which she struts to all posterity in the gorgeous though ugly costume in which Zucchero painted her?

But it was not the rich only who felt the general tide of prosperity. In the farm houses, says chronicler Harrison, there were three great changes that all men noticed. One was the multitude of chimneys newly built, when aforetime the fire was on the floor; another was the use of pillows, when once men were contented with a good round log; and the third was the change from wooden vessels to those of pewter or tin.

But far more important and more wonderful than these merely material changes, among high or low, were the changes in ideas the English mind had experienced in fifty years. The transition here from medieval life to modern life was made in a single generation. Suppose you had been a man of three-score when Henry Sidney went to Ludlow in 1559; think of what changes you could have told! When you were a boy, most likely, even though of gentle birth, you did not learn to read or write at all. The first Earl of Pembroke, I remember old Aubrey says, "could not read or write, but did have a great stamp to his name." There was fighting all the time and little prospect of anything else, with the chance that whichever side you took you might lose your head for not taking the other. And, indeed, if you had any leisure or liking to read, what was the good? In English there was little save old Dan Chaucer that was worth the reading, and in French there was nothing better; Greek was an unknown tongue, and Latin was a priests' tongue in which there was nothing but devotion and philosophy that no man with blood in him cared for. As for knowledge, men knew all that was worth knowing. They knew that this earth was a wide plain,—you had seen with the monks at the abbey a map that showed the whole of it. If you sailed away toward the setting sun, you would come after some days to the edge, where the waters rolled off to the abyss below. To the east you might go somewhat farther, past the Holy

Land to Cathay and the great Caspian Sea, where the people had long tails and feet so big they used them for umbrellas, and quite beyond all, on the farther edge, was the distant land of the great Emperor of Tartary of whom wondrous things were written (so you had heard), in the *Travels* of Sir John Mandeville. Yet the whole was not so very large; a year's travel would take you to the farthest verge,—if only you cared to go. And over your head, above the solid blue arch of the sky on which rolled every day the great orb of the sun, there was heaven, God, and the blessed saints. Down somewhere beneath your feet on the underside of this solid earth there was hell and purgatory, where you trusted your soul would not stay long, as you would leave a handsome chantry, for the priests to sing it out. And this you knew was all. You understood it all well enough. You had the evidence of your senses for it. You no more doubted the accuracy of your knowledge than you doubted that your blood stood still in your veins like water in a bottle. You knew enough: the thing to do in this life was to take care of yourself with your strong right arm; as to the life to come, that the priests would take care of,—what else were they for? And as one man in every three was a priest, it was likely to be well taken care of.

So you thought when you were young. But you had lived to see all that changed. Instead of thinking this earth flat, you had lived to know that it was round, and that there was a wonderful new world just on the other side of it,—great rivers that ran over sands of gold, Amazons, and men whose heads did grow beneath their shoulders. And although you couldn't well understand it all, yet you couldn't well doubt it, either; for hadn't you yourself seen at Plymouth the ship that had sailed quite round the world and come home without ever turning back at all? You had been told that the sun didn't move, but that the earth itself was rolling instead; and you were almost ready to believe that, for now somehow the very grounds of belief seemed different from what they used

to be, and you had learned not to trust your senses. But if so, your whole cosmogony was changed. This arch above was not an arch at all. Where then was heaven? Where was hell? You thought you knew once, but it was hardly worth while to guess now. This world, at all events, was a vaster place than you had ever dreamed of. It was perhaps enough to know that. Your son had gone with Sir Francis Drake and you wished you could go too.

But you had heard stranger things even than this of the New World. When you were a boy men came to Oxford to teach the new learning, to teach the new tongue, Greek. There was something to read now. Your son could read Homer, and Æschylus, and Plato, and Virgil, and Seneca. A whole new world had opened to the imagination here, too. And what perhaps was strangest of all: you had lived to see the Bible put into your English tongue, chained up in the church a while, under old King Hal,—whom after all you were somewhat proud of, though, to be sure, he wasn't exactly a saint,—then taken down and burned by Mary, and now you had a copy of your own. You had seen a deal of burning for religion, now for believing and now for disbelieving what seemed to you about the same things; but you had kept your own counsel and made up your mind for yourself, slowly, as well as you could. The monks were gone, that you were glad of; and now that Her Gracious Majesty, young Queen Elizabeth had come to the throne, and quiet days were here, you felt certain that, whatever religion was right, that of Spain and Rome, the enemies of your queen and country, was not right. Spain was of the devil,—that you were sure of, and with God's good grace, you and your sons would fight her to the death.

Ah, but suppose you had been a young man then,—born into the new order of things, with a new faith to keep, a new country to defend, a new queen to serve, a new world to conquer! 'Bliss was it then to be alive, but to be young was very heaven!' Our age is doubtless best for you and me; but never again will the pulse of

humanity bound so high, never again, it seems to me, can there be so much to rouse curiosity and stimulate imagination, as in that morning of modern life. The story of those days told even now over the lapse of three cold centuries stirs the blood like a trumpet peal. All England was seething with a strange new life. Within fifty years the creeds of ten centuries had been swept away. The last page of history was filled with the story of revolution and bright with the records of hero and martyr. Beyond the seas lay a New World, its wonders the vision and the dream of poetry, its untold wealth the glittering prize of adventure. Old things were done away; all things were new; and England, freest and fairest of the nations, under her virgin Queen was to lead the van in the work of regenerating the world by the word of the Gospel and the knightly sword.

It is of these days that your afternoon at Ludlow will remind you most, and of the family that lived here then,—the family that, as I have said, represents in its own members and in its circle of intimate acquaintance, better than any other family, the courtesy, the romance, the poetry, if not the statesmanship, of the great age.

Sir Henry Sidney was a little past middle life when his young queen appointed him President of the Welsh Marches and sent him to Ludlow,—"a man," says his friend Lord Brooke, "of excellent natural wit, large heart, and sweet conversation," a courtier and a soldier. He had known already many of the changes of the great world. He had been the best friend of Edward VI, and had that boy king listened to such advice as Sidney's, his rule would have been wiser if not longer. And when that misguided monarch closed his little day of rule, it was in Henry Sidney's arms that he breathed his last, and Henry Sidney's hand that closed the royal eyes. Keeping a discreet retirement during the bitter reign of Mary, both for his own sake and his wife's, he was called to duty at once by Elizabeth, and both here at Ludlow, and afterward in Ireland, served his royal mistress well. But his wife, Mary Sidney,

was of more famous line than he. Very charming are the glimpses we can get of her through the glooms of intervening centuries. Of the dangers that wait upon high station she had known more than enough in her earlier days. Her father was that proud earl of Northumberland who tried to govern Edward VI, and her brother Guildford was the young husband of the fair Lady Jane Grey. And when the ambition of her father sought to place her brother Guildford and her sister-in-law, Lady Jane, upon the throne of England, Mary Sidney had seen her father, and her brother Guildford, and her dear friend and sister, Lady Jane, all perish together by the headsman's axe. The shadow of that "Black Monday" was never wholly lifted from her life. She was often at the court of Elizabeth; but, as one who knew her said, "she chose rather to hide herself from the curious eyes of a delicate time," and to find at her home at Penshurst and here at Ludlow, where she often came with her husband, fittest scene in which to play a noble woman's part. For she was yet a Dudley, with the high ambition, the generous appreciation of greatness that marked that family. She was worthy of her heroic age, and it was her just pride to have given to that age a son and a daughter who will be remembered to all future time as patterns of all that is knightly in man, and all that is winning in woman.

But if Mary Sidney had wished to shine at the court of Elizabeth, she would have lacked no opportunity of advancement. For her surviving brother—and it would seem an affectionate and trusted brother—was Robert Dudley, the great Earl of Leicester, prime favorite of Queen Elizabeth, and for nearly twenty years foremost man in the court of England. What shall we think of this great Lord Leicester? Shall we think him merely the shallow intriguing courtier who won the favor of his queen by a handsome figure, a courtly dress, and a flattering tongue; who was incapable of any genuine devotion to any person or any cause; who broke the neck of pretty Amy Robsart—as Sir Walter tells us in *Kenilworth*—when

she stood in the way of that marriage with Queen Elizabeth for which he had dared to hope; who, when 'the bolt of Cupid missed the imperial votaress throned by the west,' poisoned the Earl of Essex that he might marry the Countess Lettice,—that

> little western flower,
> Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound:

who respected neither truth, purity, nor loyalty, and fell a victim at last to the black arts by which he had so often compassed the destruction of others? So we have often been told to think, since the Jesuit Parsons first printed his filthy pack of lies, and saucy Naunton, silly chamberman of Queen Elizabeth, wrote his *Relation.* But what shall we say then of those who numbered him among their friends? Queen Elizabeth loved this man, nay, the woman Elizabeth loved this man, and had she not known that marriage could not be her lot, would have married him; repressed her affection for him, yea, denied it, with what bitter unavailing regrets of her lonely woman's soul no man may say. And was Elizabeth, with all her follies, the woman to be won by the drop of a feather, the shape of a leg, or the turn of a compliment? Sir Philip Sidney, pattern gentleman and knight, loved and honored this Leicester, not merely, it should seem, because he was his uncle, but because he was a man; and when Leicester was assailed by the tongue of slander, it was Sidney who flamed out into indignant denial of the charge. When the great, pure, Christian poet of that age, Edmund Spenser, wrote his epic, *The Faery Queen,* he said that the central figure in that poem, Prince Arthur, friend of all the good and knightly, and foe of all the base, was meant to represent his dear friend and patron, Robert, Earl of Leicester. Was Edmund Spenser the man who could consent, for the sake of servile flattery, to give the place of honor in the great Elizabethan epic to a shallow courtier, an adulterer, and a murderer? I cannot think so hardly of Leicester or of his friends. Something worthy he must have had to win such friends. A great man he

certainly was not,—no great warrior, no great statesman. He belonged rather to that other class of men, who, while they cannot achieve greatness themselves, have the grace to appreciate it in others. He had a quick eye and open heart for most that was brightest and best in the England of his day. He called men of letters and art about himself. No statesman, he saw which way led the path of honor for his country; he was a Protestant from the start. Enthusiasm, generous sympathies, a fine bloom of courtesy, —these are not the stuff of which the highest virtues are made, but they are very winning nevertheless. My Lord of Leicester did not always follow the narrow path of honor, I fear; but he wished well to those who did, and I think his sins were those of an easy pliancy of nature, rather than of native villainy. A man whose grandfather, father, and brother have all perished on the scaffold for purely political offenses may perhaps be excused if his wariness sometimes degenerated into intrigue.

But if it is only with grave reservations that one can commend the brilliant Lord Leicester, it is with admiration unqualified that one turns to his nephew, the son of Mary and Henry Sidney. Who hasn't fashioned in his imagination the picture of Sir Philip Sidney? Who doesn't know the story—only too short a story—of his life? There is little of incident in it; it is only one bright glimpse that we can get of this pattern knight of the sixteenth century: yet this glimpse irradiates his age and still shines serene through the glooms of history. When his father took possession of this castle of Ludlow, Philip Sidney was a boy of five, and, growing up a grave and studious lad, was sent to Shrewsbury School. Very wise and tender are the letters his mother wrote him there. A little later at Oxford, with the keen intellectual curiosity of his age, the young man intermeddled with all learning, gaining whatsoever was to be learned there, and, with powers of reflection beyond his years, ripening his learning into the richer fruit of wisdom. He had a year at court with his uncle Leicester, and then he went abroad to see Europe.

To see Europe, in those days, as very likely in these, did many a young fellow more harm than good. So thought old Roger Ascham, Elizabeth's schoolmaster, who declared a year or so before young Sidney went away that young men usually brought home from Italy "for learning, less commonly than they carried out with them; for policy, a factious heart, a discoursing head, a mind to meddle in all men's matters; for experience, plenty of new mischiefs never known in England before; for manners, variety of vanities, and change of filthy living." "I was once in Italy myself," said blunt old Ascham, "but I thank God my abode there was but nine days." But it was something better than this that young Sidney learned abroad. He learned to know the great forces of Europe that were arrayed against each other for the desperate struggle of history. He was in Paris on the night of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, safely housed with his friend, the English envoy, Sir Francis Walsingham. He went on to Italy,—the bad brilliant Italy of Galileo and Machiavelli, of Raphael and Pope Sixtus. He came back to England through Strasburg, and Frankfort, and Leyden. He had seen both sides; he had made up his mind. Henceforth he would be something more than a courtier, something more than a scholar: he would be a soldier in the great battle against sin and antichrist, against the King of Spain and the Pope of Rome. But what rare charm was it that won for this man, wherever he went, the admiring love of princes, of scholars, of soldiers, of peasants? It was his Christian scholarship that won the heart of the saintly Huguenot Languet, "who daily lived as good men wish to die"; it was the wonderful ripeness of the political opinions of this young man of twenty-four that commanded the admiration of William the Silent, who wrote to Queen Elizabeth, "Your Majesty has in young Mr. Sidney one of the greatest statesmen I know in Europe"; it was his imagination, his enthusiasm, his taste, that drew around him poets like Spenser, who loved him with a love that bordered on idolatry; it was his manly beauty, grace of manner, the fine flower of courtesy that

drew the admiring glance of courtiers and of ladies,—"extremely beautiful he was," says gossiping old Aubrey, "much like his sister"; it was the union of all these qualities, "the courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword," the high erected thoughts seated in a heart of courtesy: all these, but it was something more than all these, too, that won for young Sidney his undying reputation as the pattern gentleman. It was that rarest grace of self-denial and self-forgetfulness in his devotion to others that has spread around his name the lasting fragrance of a pure renown, and has consecrated to posterity the story of his death. That story, thousands who know nothing else of Sidney learned in their childhood never to forget. He had passed some impatient years at court chafing under the restrictions of Elizabeth, who protested she could not spare so bright an ornament; during a short season of enforced idleness with his sister at Wilton he had given expression to his enthusiasm and his poetry in that now almost forgotten romance, the *Arcadia;* his voice, wise and eloquent though youthful, had been heard in parliament: but all this life was too tame. With the fire of youth he longed for the front of the battle. His heart was with the Raleighs, the Gilberts, the Drakes. Once, indeed, he stole away to Plymouth to sail with his friend Sir Francis Drake against the Spaniards; but Queen Elizabeth heard of it, and her absolute command brought him back, and he had to wait another year before he could at last go to the Netherlands with Leicester where, after nearly a year in idleness, he fell at Zutphen, grievously wounded. And then happened the incident that has immortalized his name. "Being thirsty with excess of bleeding," writes his earliest biographer,[1] "he called for drink which was presently brought him; but as he was putting the bottle to his mouth, he saw a poor soldier carried along, who had eaten his last at the same feast, ghastly casting up his eyes at the bottle. Which Sir

[1] Old Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, that shadowy enigmatical character, so alluring to Lamb, who in his self-composed epitaph designates himself "servant to Queen Elizabeth, conceller to King James, frend to Sir Philip Sidney." [L. B. G.]

Philip perceiving, took it from his head, before he drank, and delivered it to the poor man, with these words, 'Thy necessity is yet greater than mine.' And when he had pledged this poor soldier, he was presently carried to Arnheim." Here he died three weeks later with words of Christian hope upon his lips. At his death, says his chaplain who watched by his side, he lifted up his eyes and hands uttering these words, "I would not change my joy for the empire of the world." So passed, at the age of thirty-two, a true knight, "who trod," as an old writer says, "from his cradle to his grave amid incense and flowers and died in a dream of glory." The pattern gentleman of England, is not that a goodly fame? I think it cannot be that any of the several portraits we have gives us the charm of his face. His best portrait was that drawn by an obscure anonymous writer just after his death, in the oft-quoted lines:

> A sweet attractive kinde of grace,
> A full assurance given by lookes,
> Continuall comfort in a face,
> The lineaments of Gospell bookes.

One would like to know more of Philip Sidney's sister, Mary. Like her mother, Mary Sidney was never ambitious to shine in courts or to meddle with the affairs of state, and the records of the historian, therefore, but seldom mention her. But no woman of her age has a more enviable fame than she. About the time that Philip Sidney came home from his travels on the Continent, his sister Mary married the Earl of Pembroke, a grave and quiet man much older than herself. For forty years thereafter, Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, was perhaps the one woman in England best worth knowing. In those days learning was thought to befit a woman as well as a man, and Mary Sidney was mistress not only of the French, Italian, and Latin languages, but of the Greek and Hebrew as well. She was a graceful writer of verse; and her house at Wilton—beautiful still in its quiet seclusion just within

sight of the graceful cathedral spire of Salisbury—and her town-house in Aldersgate Street were the homes of learning and of poetry. Her society was sought by the greatest and the wisest of her day. Her brother Philip wrote for her amusement the *Arcadia,—The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* is its name, you remember. Edmund Spenser sang her praise in one of his best minor poems. A host of lesser lyric singers fluttered about her. She was, it is safe to say, the patron and friend of Shakespeare himself, and we know that her son, William Herbert,—after his father's death third Earl of Pembroke, in later days Chancellor of Oxford, founder of Pembroke College, the man who was, says Clarendon, the most universally beloved and esteemed of any in that age,—we know, I say, that this young William Herbert, Mary Sidney's son and Philip Sidney's nephew, was a generous and intelligent friend of Shakespeare. It was to him that the first folio edition of Shakespeare was dedicated, and if we could ever unriddle that world's enigma, the *Sonnets* of Shakespeare, I think it probable that we should find the "Mr. W. H." to whom they are dedicated to be none other than young William Herbert, Mary Sidney's son. It was to Mary Sidney, too, that Shakespeare's great compeer, Ben Jonson, dedicated some of his best work, with words of such wise and manly esteem as do credit alike to him and to her. She outlived her husband many years, retaining to the last the increasing honor and affection of all in England whose regard was worth most, and when she died it was Ben Jonson [1] who wrote for her the beautiful and famous epitaph:

> Underneath this sable hearse
> Lies the subject of all verse,
> Sidney's sister, Pembroke's mother;
> Death, ere thou hast slain another,
> Fair, and learned, and good as she,
> Time shall throw a dart at thee.

[1] Or perhaps William Browne. See note F. E. Schelling's *Elizabethan Lyrics*, pp. 294-5. [L. B. G.]

There was another noble family whose relations with the Sidneys every one familiar with the story will recollect. In those relations lay the romance and the pathos of Philip Sidney's life. When Philip Sidney's father, Henry Sidney, went to take possession of this castle of Ludlow, among his circle of noble acquaintance was Walter Devereux, Earl of Essex. This Earl of Essex would seem to have been an honest and good man, but he had just set his hand to that never ending and, I fear, hopeless task of composing Ireland to English rule. It was, at best, a bad and bloody business, and my Lord of Essex made but a poor success of it. He marched and countermarched, killed some hundreds of kerns and gallowglasses, and, if the truth be told, some hundreds of Irish mothers and babies too, and, harassed by failure in Ireland and faction at home, was glad to give up the task of quieting Ireland to his friend Henry Sidney, who tried milder measures with but little better success. But before my Lord of Essex could get back to England he was seized with a violent illness, which proved the death of him. On his deathbed, says his chronicler, his chief care was for his children, lamenting the time which is so ungodly, lest they should learn of this vile world. "O my poor children," would he say, "God bless you and give you of his grace." Perhaps the dying father knew that the impetuous temper of his children portended for them a stormy career. At all events their after life justified his apprehensions. This Earl of Essex, like Henry Sidney, had a son and a daughter, Robert and Penelope Devereux, and the story of Robert Devereux, third Earl of Essex, and of Penelope, his sister, is quite as famous and romantic as that of Philip and Mary Sidney, but unhappily theirs is not so fair a fame.

Penelope Devereux was only thirteen years old when her father died. Four years later she was the most beautiful woman in England. Not Bessie Throgmorton, the fair maid of honor who became Walter Raleigh's wife, not Lucy Harrington, the lovely Countess of Bedford, not even her own cousin, the charming Eliza-

beth Vernon, Helen of the Elizabethan poets, whom Shakespeare's friend, the Earl of Southampton, wooed for five years and braved the anger of his sovereign to marry at last,—none of these, nor any other woman whose portrait or story has come down to us, can have had, I think, the strangely fascinating beauty, the wild, impetuous charm of Penelope Devereux. Strangely enough, no portrait of her painted by brush of artist is known to be in existence; yet her beauty has been so enshrined in poetry that it is not difficult to image it. Her abundant hair was of that hue of tawny gold which catches every gleam of the sun and shines in lustrous glimmerings,—"beams of gold caught in a net," said her lover. But her complexion, in strange and striking contrast to her hair, was dark,—her cheek a kindly claret, her face like Juliet's, full of the warm South; and her eyes, under raven brows and lashes, were as black as night, now soft and melting, now glowing with an imperial radiance. These eyes were the marvel of her face,—"black stars, twin children of the sun," as her lover calls them,—and one can fancy as he reads her story that he sees through all the darks of the past the soft splendor of their beauty. This woman with a face of such startling beauty, "day with its golden lights in her hair, night and starlight in her eyes," as one admirer says; this woman with the pride of a house that bore high rank in Normandy before ever the Conqueror set foot in England: this was the woman who should have found her home and her fame as the wife of Philip Sidney. They had been intended for each other from childhood, and when Penelope Devereux's father lay dying he sent a message of regret to Philip Sidney that he could not live to call him son. But as the girl grew to womanhood the match was broken off,—no one knows why or by whom,—and before she was nineteen Penelope Devereux was forced by her guardians to marry one of the richest and one of the basest men in England, Lord Rich, a sordid, cold, brutal young fellow who had inherited the vast stealings of his father, Chancellor Rich. She loathed the man; she protested at the very altar, but in vain; and

too late Philip Sidney awoke to find, as it would seem from some of his sonnets, that he had pressed his suit too languidly, and that his lady was already given to another. It was then that he wrote that series of sonnets, *Astrophel and Stella,* on which his fame as a poet—and as a lover—rests. In spite of the over-elaborate diction of the time in which they are written, I do not see how any one can read them without feeling that it is the genuine love of a genuine man that is written here, that Sidney, as he says in his first sonnet, looked in his heart and wrote. And let it be said in charitable memory of Penelope Devereux, that there is nothing in these sonnets to cast any shadow on her fame. Love to the cold and sordid man to whom she had been wedded was out of the question; but I think there is no reason to doubt her truth to him while Philip Sidney lived. Very touching and very significant are the earnest, passionate lines in the eighth song, in which Sidney tells how his lady returned his love:

Astrophel, sayd she, my loue,
Cease, in these effects, to proue;
Now be still, yet still beleeue me,
Thy griefe more then death would grieue me.
. . . . . .
If those eyes you praisèd, be
Halfe so deare as you to me,
Let me home returne, starke blinded
Of those eyes, and blinder minded.

If to secret of my hart,
I do any wish impart,
Where thou art not formost placèd,
Be both wish and I defacèd.
. . . . . .
Trust me, while I thee deny,
In my selfe the smart I try;
Tyran Honour doth thus vse thee,
Stella's self might not refuse thee.

Therefore, deare, this no more moue,
Least, though I leaue not thy loue,
Which too deep in me is framèd,
I should blush when thou are namèd.

But some two years after the marriage of Lady Rich, Sidney himself married Fanny Walsingham, daughter of his old friend,—marriage, it will be remembered, was for the only son of a great English house a necessity,—and two years later he died. After that, much that was best in Lady Rich died too. Her haughty and impetuous nature was not likely to bear its bondage meekly. Her imperial beauty was full of temptations. When, now and then, her face gleams upon us in the poetry or letters of the time it has oftenest some wild light of passion on it. It has been plausibly conjectured that she is the "dark lady" of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*. The treatment of her husband seems to have passed from brutal abuse to stolid indifference, and after a few years he left her altogether. Then came the wild story of her brother Robert to cast a more lurid light and then a deeper shadow over her path. The outlines of that story you all remember: how the young Robert Devereux, with much of his sister's beauty and charm of manner, was, after the death of Leicester, Elizabeth's favorite courtier; how he, too, like his father attempted that fatal Irish business, and failed more disastrously than his father; how he wasn't fortunate enough to die in Ireland, but came back to London, and scolded and stormed like a spoiled child, and at last, when he couldn't gain the favor of Elizabeth, got a few fellows as foolish as himself into his great house in the Strand, and issued out thence, one Sunday morning, on a foolhardy insurrection to do nobody knew what, and he himself least of all. And doesn't every school girl know how Elizabeth, in mingled sorrow and pride and anger, found it necessary to sign the warrant for taking off the handsome head of her last favorite, Robert Devereux, and how she never smiled afterward? In all that time one can see the restless, fateful figure of Penelope Devereux flitting hither and thither. It was her ambition goaded by her misery that spurred her brother on to folly. "She did urge me on," said he, a few days before he died, "by telling me how all my friends and followers thought me a coward, and that I had lost my valour."

One wonders whether Shakespeare didn't draw Lady Macbeth from her. While her brother lay under sentence of death, with remorseful pity she besieged the throne for his pardon; she entreated, she bribed, she lay in wait at Elizabeth's door and pleaded with all the eloquence of love, and beauty, and tears. But it was in vain: and when her brother perished, poor Lady Rich seems to have sunk in despair of happiness or of virtue. One sees her again at the court of James,—her wonderful charm yet undimmed; but one doesn't like to think of Philip Sidney's Stella as shining in that basest of courts.

Yet one more life was that baleful star to destroy before it went out. For years Lady Rich had one friend whose love, if not honorable, was at least constant. Lord Mountjoy, Earl of Devonshire, was brave, honest, and his honor would have been untarnished had he not loved Penelope Devereux too well. Through all the storm of her life, he had been but too true to her, and for years the relations of Lady Rich with himself had been no secret. He wished to give to those relations the sanction of law and of religion, and as Lady Rich had been deserted by her wretched husband for some twelve years, a divorce was granted her by Archbishop Laud and she was shortly afterward married to Lord Mountjoy. But the fate of her family was over her. There was some flaw in the divorce that made her new union illegal. A storm of indignation fell upon the head of Lord Mountjoy. The Earl winced under the charge, but he would never for a moment belie his love for the woman he had at last wedded. He wrote a letter of passionate exculpation to the cold-blooded hypocrite who now sat on the English throne, he pleaded with manly tenderness in the name of religion and of charity for his wife: but it was to no purpose. With much of that high honor that feels a stain like a wound, he sank under the storm of undeserved opprobrium, and died only four months after his marriage, in the arms of his wife. "The grief of his unfortunate love," says his secretary, "did bring him to his end." With his death the star of

Penelope Devereux went out in impenetrable night. There is no later story of her, no portrait, no record: only a few years ago in a Latin history printed in Amsterdam was found the statement that after his death she lay, in the robes of her mourning, night and day, stretched on the floor in the corner of her chamber, refusing to be comforted except by death. That kindly comfort came in a few months, and the beauty, the idol of two courts, whose charms the greatest poets of the age had sung, died forgotten and alone.

'In all the chronicles of wasted time, when beauty doth make beautiful old rhyme, in praise of ladies dead,' you shall not find a face of more supreme fascination, a story of sadder, sin-stained pathos than that of Sidney's Stella, Penelope Devereux.

To name the friends of the Sidney family would be to name almost all the most famous men of the last half of the sixteenth century. One, there was among them, the friend of the Sidneys from boyhood who seems to me the typical, representative figure of his age. For if we look for one man in whom we may find combined the restless adventure, the splendid daring, the romantic sentiment at once wild and tender, the exquisite literary tastes, the noble patriotism, and, above all, that high and reverent religious feeling which blended love of country with love of God and made strength and valor beautiful,—all these sentiments so characteristic of the Elizabethan age at its best,—where shall we find them together, I say, save in this man, Walter Raleigh? What a world it was in which he lived! What a vast horizon of hopes! What a rushing torrent of passion! What a sinewy strength of endeavor in that Elizabethan life! And what men were on earth in those days! For a preacher a Hooker, for a thinker a Bacon, for poets a Marlowe, a Ben Jonson, a Spenser, a Shakespeare; on the throne a woman who had dared badger every sovereign in Europe; and all round the world, sailing under the cross of St. George, Englishmen with their hearts beating fast and their imaginations on fire. And in such an age, among

such men, Walter Raleigh seems to tower above them all. What a career! Born when the Smithfield martyr fires were just flickering their last, nourished on tales of adventure and heroism, he drew his virgin sword when only a lad in the holy cause of suffering Protestantism in the Netherlands; he saw great Condé fall at Jarnac; he stood silently by in horror on the night of St. Bartholomew. And he never forgot those days. When he stormed Cadiz; when he hurried over the Atlantic again and again to fight the Spaniard amid the pestilence of the tropics, or to fix his hold upon the fairest lands of the New World for his virgin Queen; when he laughed with stern joy to see the great Armada sailing up the channel to its doom: through it all he bore the consecrated bravery of a man who had early taken upon himself a solemn mission of unalterable hostility to the foe of his country and of his religion. Mistakes, yes; sins, he has to answer for; but this high purpose sheds around his whole life the bright air of heroism. "Damnably proud," says poor-spirited old gossip Aubrey; "too ambitious," say more modern historians. But Raleigh's ambition was of no mean, selfish sort. With truth could he say the great ends he aimed at were "his country's, God's, and truth's."

At home he was the ornament of his age. No mean poet himself, he was the best friend of other poets; but for his kind encouragement the world might have never seen the great epic of the age, Edmund Spenser's *Faery Queen*. He had the silver tongue of the orator, and in his *History of the World* there are passages of deep and moving eloquence, so solemn and so grand that I am sure no other Englishman of his age could have written them save William Shakespeare only. And more than all else, how wise a statesman he was. It wasn't, you may be sure, any such pretty trick as the throwing of his gay cloak before the passing feet of Queen Bess that won him his high place in her regard. She knew Walter Raleigh for a wise as well as a gallant man. His views of the relations of England to Protestantism, his colonial policy, his com-

mercial policy, were all far in advance of his time. We Americans, in especial, ought to be the first to honor his memory, for we owe more to him than to any other Englishman. It was Walter Raleigh, rather than any other Englishman, who first determined that the empire of this new world must fall into the hands of Protestant England rather than into the hands of Papal Spain. Above all, save America,—his Virginia as he wanted to call it,—save America for England and for the faith. To make that sure he spent his hopes, his treasure, and his blood; and would have willingly given all, had they been twenty times as rich. And he made that sure. It is not too much to say, as Dean Stanley once said, that Walter Raleigh is the father of the United States of America.

Soldier, sailor, poet, orator, courtier, statesman, hero, —his life swept around the whole orbit of human endeavor and human achievement; and the record of it is a power and an inspiration still. With all his faults, he was a manly champion of that Christianity that had iron in its blood, and thought some things worth dying for: he is a goodly saint of the Protestant calendar.

One famous group of men there was who shared largely in Raleigh's spirit, and who always had Raleigh's admiring friendship, and Sidney's too, so long as Sidney lived. Go back in your imagination, if you can, to the 19th of July, 1588, and to the yard of the little seaward looking Pelican Inn at Plymouth. It is almost sundown, and, in the cool of the day, a group of men are just beginning a game of bowls. They are almost all Devonshire men, born in sight of blue water. There was Raleigh himself, a look of anxiety on his face, perhaps, that July afternoon,—for there was cause,—but a look of command, too, we may be sure. "He did ever have," says old Aubrey, "an awfulness and ascendancy in his aspect over other mortals." Near Raleigh that afternoon, we know, was his old friend John Davis, who had paddled with him on the Dart when they were boys together. Since those days, John Davis had battled with wave and tempest and the

worst dangers of hunger and mutiny in the unknown seas around the South Pole, in a voyage the story of which is stranger than any romance, and only the summer before he had struggled up through the icy strait that bears his name, in a leaky little cutter of thirty tons, till he got four degrees nearer the frozen pole than any ship had ever gone before. Hardy seaman, brave Christian man, was this Davis, with the quick imagination and the warm heart of a poet inside him, too, as his letters will show.

Near him was a man who looks no poet, but a true sea-dog,

> long, and lank, and brown,
> As is the ribbed sea-sand.

His leathern face has been tanned in the tropics and frozen at both poles. He is slow of speech, but he always remembers how, when he, who but a little while before was only a poor sailor lad, was about to sail away with a ship of his own, his glorious Queen deigned to come down to Greenwich where his good ship lay, to set her royal foot on board, to put her royal hand in his, and to say, "God speed you, Martin Frobisher." That was his reward; he asked no better. In the company that July afternoon was the commander of them all, Lord Howard of Effingham, Lord High Admiral of England; there, too, was the tall majestic form of Sir Richard Grenville,—the Spaniard's Terror, men called him. And there in the very center of the group was an old veteran of the seas, a very Ancient Mariner. You could hardly have told how old he was, for he had a sailor's stoop and a sliding gait, a rusty frowze of hair and a general look as if he had been salted and dried. That was old Sir John Hawkins, the man who made the English navy, and taught most of the men around him what they knew of seamanship. He had a deal of fight in him yet, as the Spaniards found before a week was over. And near Sir John, stood his favorite pupil, the last of the group and perhaps the most striking figure of them all—forty-one years old, short and stoutly built, a round head and a stiff

frizzle of hair over it, gray eyes unusually long and narrow, through which he looked with a kind of squint, and a stubble of beard about mouth and chin. That was Sir Francis Drake, Vice-Admiral of the Fleet. The world knew who Drake was. It was seventeen years before, when he was only twenty-four years old, that he climbed the tree on the peak in Darien, and looking out thence with eager eyes got his first glimpse of the great Pacific, and resolved, God willing, to sail an English ship in those seas. Since then he had sailed an English ship in almost every sea under the whole heaven, and "singed the Spaniard's beard" in many a hot encounter. That afternoon in the yard of the Pelican Inn, he was just about to begin the game. He slowly bent forward, swung back his arm, and held the ball poised an instant before he should hurl it down the alley; when in that instant there rushed in a weather-beaten tar shouting to the Lord Admiral, "My Lord! My Lord! they're coomin'! they're coomin'! I saw 'em off the Lizard last night! They're coomin' full-sail, hundreds of 'em, a-darkenin the waters!" Drake stayed his uplifted hand a moment only, then sent the ball thundering down the planks, and coolly turning to the Admiral said, "There will be time to finish the game, my Lord, and then we'll go out and give the Dons a thrashing!" How sound a thrashing they gave the Dons of the Spanish Armada in the week that followed, every one knows. If the thrashing had gone the other way, you and I would not be living in a free Protestant land to-day.

But wonderful as the victory over the Armada was, it seems to me one of the least of their exploits. The story of what those men dared in the last quarter of the sixteenth century thrills me as nothing else. Do you know anything like it? It is a nobler epic than Homer ever sang, a grander tale than that of Troy. Davis in his little pinnace at midnight steering through the tortuous strait of Magellan that no English keel had ever cut before; Drake stealing like a shadow up the west coast of South America, swooping down upon Spanish settle-

ments, and then striking boldly out into the unknown Pacific to sail around the world; good Humphrey Gilbert exploring all the coast of North America in a cutter of ten tons burthen—ten tons, think of it!—there is no end to that story of heroism. These men were England's true knights, for it was not for mere gain or glory that they fought. At the bottom of all this romantic heroism, there was a profound religious sentiment. We shall never read aright that glorious page of history until we understand that singular combination of the ardor of religion and the ardor of ambition which, centuries before, hurried all Europe to the tomb of the Saviour, and now fired all England to a new crusade against the abominations of Rome and the cruelties of Spain. There was need. On the continent Protestantism was fighting a losing battle. With the triumph of the Guises, France was lost to the cause. The Netherlands were writhing under the armed heel of Philip. Priests of the new order of Jesus were skulking in every corner of England, darkly weaving no one knew what slimy webs of intrigue, carrying daggers meant for the heart of Elizabeth herself. What Rome could do the Eve of St. Bartholomew told. What Spain was doing every lad of a dozen years knew well enough. She had fixed her clutch upon the fairest portions of the New World; she was slaying its savages and gathering its gold. Every year her soldiery were butchering the inoffensive Indians by thousands; every year her treasure-fleet came home groaning under its load of ill-gotten gain. Nay, Englishmen needed not to look so far to see the work of Spain. Over the Channel in the Netherlands, under the very shadow of the English coast, Parma and his red-handed men were about their ghastly work.

England was left alone as the champion of Protestantism. All the noblest men who made that history felt it to be so, accepted the commission as if it were divine. Spain was not only the foe of England: she was the foe of humanity, the foe of God. It was in this spirit that their noblest deeds were done. Read the story of it and

see. On Hawkins' ship the record tells us, "we gathered together morning and evening to serve God." When Luke Fox's ship sails away,—I am quoting from Froude,—the crew agree: "1st. That all the company shall duly repair every day at the call of the bell to hear prayers, in a godly and devout manner as Christians ought. 2nd. That no man shall swear by the name of God, or use any profane oath." "The ice was strong," says one of Frobisher's men in telling the story of their liberation from the grip of the polar sea, "The ice was strong, but God was stronger!" When Humphrey Gilbert's ten-ton ship, hammered almost to pieces on the icy rocks of Labrador, was slowly going down in mid-ocean, the master, standing on deck, called to his companions, "Be of good cheer, men; we are as near heaven by sea, as by land." "A speech," says the old chronicler, "very well becoming a soldier resolute in Christ Jesus as I can testify he was." The morning after his game of bowls, Drake, looking coolly out upon the Spanish sails that whitened all the Channel, wrote, "By the grace of God, if I live, I doubt not to handle the matter with this Duke of Sidonia as he shall wish himself at home among his orange trees; only God give us grace to depend upon Him." Sir Richard Grenville, after having for fifteen hours in his one ship, with only a hundred men, fought fifteen Spanish galleons, manned by ten thousand men, and after having sunk two of them, and disabled a half dozen more, his own ship riddled through and through and leaking at every seam, at last, shot three times through the body, lay down to die, with these words on his lips: "Here die I, Richard Grenville, with a joyful and a quiet mind, for that I have ended my life as a true soldier ought to do, that has fought for his country, his queen, his honour, and his religion."

These men, and such as these, I call England's knights. Rough, hardy, adventurous, often mistaken, often sinning, they were yet honest Christian men. They thought themselves fighting the battles of God: and for my part I believe they were right. Certainly in these tamer days it is inspiring to read the record of downright men who thought the

truth worth fighting for and believed the devil something more than a metaphor.

But time would fail me to tell of all the great names that will rise to your recollection as you lie on the grass in the old castle of Ludlow and dream of the days when the Sidneys lived there. You will think of those writers in whose pages, after all, we may see the liveliest picture of that bygone time. You will think of that shy and retiring poet, Edmund Spenser, bosom friend of Sidney and of Raleigh, who, finding no place in the sterner struggles of that battling age for a temper so mild as his, yet feeling none the less at his heart the thrill of a poet's and a patriot's sympathy with it all, withdrew to his retirement in Ireland, and put all that was noblest in that age into the deathless verse of his great epic, the epic of England, the Faery Land, and of Elizabeth, the Faery Queen.

Or you may, perhaps, for some moments imagine that you are in the London of Sidney and Raleigh, and that you have taken boat across the Thames on some sunny afternoon, and made your way by three of the clock to that curious, tall, six-sided, wooden building just erected in Bankside over which a big red flag is flying. You go in at a door above which is an effigy of Atlas bearing his Globe—for this is the New Globe Theater; you stand upon the ground among a motley crowd, but you can see the rush-strewn stage well enough, with the gay young gallants who sit talking before the curtain. A trumpet somewhere blares three times: the curtain is drawn aside to show a bare stage with a big painted sign at the back marked Verona, and lo! there comes Tybalt, and Mercutio, and Romeo, and at that odd little window in the background a boy in girl's apparel is speaking out the words of Juliet. And among the young fellows at the front of the stage, on the side, you may perhaps catch a glimpse of an eager face with a forehead so high and eyes so still that there is yet a look of quiet in it,—thinking perhaps of his Juliet whom he has left at Stratford-on-Avon, and of his fair twin girls. Anybody will tell you that this is the new playwright, Will Shakespeare, keen and masterful

young fellow, who wrote the play you are watching and owns a good part of the theater you are in. But no one will tell you that this young man is the greatest writer this world has yet been able to produce, widest, wisest mind of his great age, and unmatched in all ages thus far. Posterity is just learning that to-day.

Or in fancy, you will take a stroll at nightfall down the long street of the Strand,—pleasant green fields about you at Charing Cross where you start, pleasant fields all the way on your left, where now is the "multitudinous dust-whirl of great London," and on your right noble new palaces with broad gardens that run down to the grassy banks of the small, fair-flowing Thames. And just as you reach the City, and pass in under Temple Bar, looking for an inn, you shall see a snug one just at your right. On the creaking sign that hangs at the door St. Dunstan is pulling the Devil by the nose, for this is the Devil Tavern. It will pay you to go in. Quite likely you will find Raleigh here, likely enough Will Shakespeare too, and over the door of the inner room as you go in you see the beckoning invitation,

> Welcome all who lead or follow
> To the Oracle of Apollo.

Yonder at the head of the board—nowhere else you may be sure—sits the master spirit here. Mountain belly and rocky face, tun of canary on legs, hard-headed old controversialist, obstinate as the east wind, and with an egotism that fairly rose into the regions of the sublime,—you wouldn't take him for a poet. But he was a poet, nevertheless, and no mean philosopher beside. Not a very great man, perhaps, this Ben Jonson, but certainly a very big one. He carried about a deal of hard common sense, and he could use it on occasion. It would have been wise to agree with him, for like his namesake of one hundred and fifty years later, old Sam Johnson, he was a hard hitter in argument, and if his pistol missed fire, he would knock you down with the butt end of it. But there was somewhere inside that great hulking body of his a spark of pure Prome-

thean fire, and now and then there broke from him some ray of poetry, keen and clear, and fair of rosy hue, that shines like a diamond through the centuries. He had a gay and airy fancy such as no other singer of his day could equal—Ben Jonson was Sam Johnson plus Puck. But he was among the last of the Elizabethans, and his name carries us out of that great age of the Sidneys in which your thoughts have dwelt for a little time.

But before the afternoon sun sinks behind the broken rim of the castle wall and the old warden limps in to tell you it is time to go, there is one other scene ever memorable in these walls that your memory will repaint. It was in 1634. Sidney had been in his soldier's grave for almost fifty years, and the little band of idealists who had inspired England with high ideals of gentle life and reproduced for a little time all that was noblest in the olden chivalry, broken first by Sidney's fall, had dropped one by one away. Spenser, the poet, chased from his burning home in Ireland, had died alone in an inn of King Street, Westminster; Raleigh, the hero, fallen on evil days, had gone to his dungeon and thence to his scaffold; and Elizabeth herself, the center of all this romantic devotion, had grown old, and crazed, and despairing, and died: upon her throne sat that learned dunce, that misbegotten pedant whose mother was a fiend and whose father was a fool, and who had less poetry in his obstinate, and conceited, and canting soul than the straitest Puritan in his realm. And after some years of boasting inefficiency, this James had gone the way of all kings and his son, Charles, reigned in his stead,—poor easy Charles, of gentle manners, voluptuous tastes, tyrannical principles, and elastic conscience. The Elizabethan days were over. The dream had passed, the glamour faded quite away. Money-getting, trade, sciences, philosophy, much jangle of controversy,—all this in abundance, but the great age was by. Provincial Ludlow in those days was no better than the rest of England,—quite likely worse, if we may judge from what a lean, sallow-faced, crop-haired Shropshire servant boy of sixteen who lived here for a year

or so then reported of it. Richard Baxter used to say in after life that he had learned nothing good as a boy at Ludlow, and that had he stayed there much longer he should have forgotten all the teachings of his pious father.

It was, then, in this later and lower time on Michaelmas evening of 1634, that this old castle of Ludlow blazed with unusual festivities. For a new President of the Welsh Marches, and the last one, had come to take up his official residence here,—the Earl of Bridgewater, no unworthy successor of the Sidneys. In his family were preserved the traditions of a nobler age. His father was the great Chancellor Ellesmere; his mother-in-law—who was oddly his stepmother too—was Alice Spencer of Althorp, the relative and friend of our great poet, and besung in her girlhood by him in one of his best poems, and by a host of other lesser singers of the Elizabethan time. This Earl of Bridgewater is now a grave man of fifty-four, and he has brought with him to Ludlow his two black-haired boys of eleven and twelve, and his pretty daughter Alice, a year or so older. It is then to welcome this Earl and his family that the old castle has put on its gayety to-night. It is evident that something of special brilliancy is preparing in the great hall.

As you lie on the grassy turf which is now its only floor, it is easy to imagine that scene of more than two hundred and fifty years ago. On one side of the hall, in the great fireplace there, a ruddy fire is glowing and crackling, and in spite of all the tapers, casting flickering lights across upon the three, long, narrow lancet windows opposite. Between the two doors at the south end, a stage has been set up, and behind the curtain you hear the notes of the musicians tuning their instruments. In through the door at the lower left hand comes streaming the company. Now they are in their seats; there is a rustle, a murmur, a tinkle of the bell, a hush, the stage is darkened to show it is night, and the curtain is drawn aside discovering a wild wood; and "swift as the sparkle of a glancing star," to soft music,

glides in a tall, slight young man, habited as a spirit, and as the music pauses you catch his opening words:

> Before the starry threshold of Jove's court
> My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
> Of bright, aërial Spirits live insphered
> In regions mild of calm and serene air,
> Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot
> Which men call Earth, and, with low-thoughted care,
> Confined, and pestered in this pinfold here,
> Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
> Unmindful of the crown that Virtue gives.

This young man is Mr. Lawes, the well-known musician of London, who has arranged the music and scenery for this masque; and the words he is speaking were written for the occasion by a young friend of his not much known yet, but likely in the judgment of some to be heard of by and by,—the ingenious young Mr. John Milton, recently student of Christ's College, Cambridge. Mr. Milton has written some verses, but never dared to print any as yet, and he has never before had so large a circle of hearers as this evening at Ludlow Castle.

When you and I read that masque of *Comus,* how it all seems to come back to us as if we had ourselves seen it: the great hall with its deep-embayed windows, arched roof, and tapestry-hung walls; this bright company, the two black-eyed boys of the Earl as the two brothers and pretty Alice Egerton as the lady of the masque, speaking out with soft and solemn-breathing sound those lines of matchless poetry. And if the company that night had ears to hear, what must they have thought of Mr. Milton's masque of *Comus.* Nothing like it had been heard in England since the voice of Shakespeare grew silent twenty years before; nothing so beautiful has ever been heard in England since. It was one more strain of the old Elizabethan music, high, and clear, and pure, and more sedately sweet. Something of the old passionate ardor is gone, perhaps, but it is still the tremulous sensitiveness to beauty, the high imagination, the knightly love of truth, of a

Spenser and a Sidney that lives in these lines,—lines so perfect that they shine aloft like stars forever, high, still, serene. It was fitting that this, Milton's best poem, should first have been heard in the hall of the Sidneys. For it was the last note of that elder music. No one but Milton knew the secret of that strain, and even he soon lost the mastery of it. When next he sang, there was a jarring note of discord in his song, a distant sound of coming strife. In *Comus* the young Milton pleads with the fire of a Raleigh and the imagination of a Spenser for the union of all that is good with all that is fair. But it was too late. Much of the high devotion to truth and duty lived on, indeed, but too often united with narrowness of sympathy and dimness of vision. The stern logic of events seemed effecting a divorce between the ethical and the æsthetical elements of English character; the poets lost their purity, and the Puritans lost their poetry. Englishmen were taking sides in a long and bitter quarrel, in which victory for either side could not be an unmixed good. It was no longer the large, united, heroic Elizabethan England of the Faery Queen. The light that never was on sea or land was beclouded by the smoke of battle, and then faded into common day.

It is then with this last strain of the elder music in our ears that we may well go out at sundown from the walls of the old castle. As we pass again through the high-arched gate, under the grinning teeth of the rusty portcullis, we shall hardly care to remember that in that little room over the gate, thirty years later when the Puritan cause had been won and lost again, a witty satirist sat down to write a poem of rattling doggerel that should turn the ridicule of a dissolute age against a fallen cause, and wake wild laughter in the throats of fools. We shall hardly care to remember that Samuel Butler's *Hudibras* was written to mock the cause for which Milton fought, within the very walls where Sidney dwelt. So rather, as we go down the hill to our inn, and turn to get a last look at the old castle in the long lingering English twilight, and still feel the

vague sense of sympathy for all the varying pathos of human hope, and ambition, and glory gone and crumbled like its crumbling walls; for the story ever old of human life, how young and bright soever, passing too soon to death and dull oblivion; we will couple with our last look the closing lines of that last and noblest poem ever heard within the walls of Ludlow, words which sum up the lessons we may read in all that part of the past which is really immortal:

> Heaven hath timely tried their youth,
> Their faith, their patience, and their truth,
> And sent them here through hard assays
> With a crown of deathless praise.
> . . . . . .
> Mortals, that would follow me,
> Love Virtue, she alone is free;
> She can teach ye how to climb
> Higher than the spheary chime:
> Or, if Virtue feeble were,
> Heaven itself would stoop to her.

AS YOU LIKE IT

WHEN, about 1598, Shakespeare had finished that great cycle of historical dramas which culminated in the *Henry IV* and the *Henry V,* he betook himself for a time exclusively to comedy. For three or four years he seems to have written nothing else. Why this was we cannot now tell. It may possibly have been because comedy was wanted by the theatrical company for which he was writing, or for some other such purely external reason. But one naturally prefers to think that after the stress of passionate feeling and heroic action which for some five years he had been depicting in his great histories and his early tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet,* he craved variety and relief and gladly turned to the more lightsome side of human experience and the more playful and humorous phases of character. Two comedies, indeed, had probably been written during the years in which he was finishing the *Henry IV* and the *Henry V;* but these two comedies—*The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *The Taming of the Shrew*—seem to lie upon one side of the main course of Shakespeare's work. He certainly did not put the best of himself into them. It is as if he turned them off rapidly, perhaps to meet some incidental demand, while his thought and interest were mainly given to other work. *The Taming of the Shrew,* all the critics, I think, now agree, is only in part Shakespeare's work, being probably an old play hurriedly patched up by him, and then enlarged at a later day by some other hand. And *The Merry Wives,* though it is Shakespeare's throughout, must, it seems to me, have been written at the suggestion of some unwise admirer of Falstaff who thought it would be vastly diverting to see the fat knight in love. But one could wish that Shakespeare had declined to listen to any such suggestion, even though it

came, as tradition asserts, from Elizabeth herself; for Falstaff in *The Merry Wives* is certainly translated worse than Bottom ever was. Only Sir Hugh and Slender and Mistress Anne, they are delightful and in the true Shakespearian manner.

But when Shakespeare had well finished the histories and was at liberty to turn all his energies into comedy, he wrote those three most delightful plays, the *Much Ado About Nothing,* the *Twelfth Night,* the *As You Like It.* I take it these are the best examples of Shakespeare's pure comedy. It is true that he had already begun in the historical plays to unite tragic and comic elements, and some of his later works, like *The Winter's Tale,* combine the characteristics of comedy and tragedy in proportions so nearly equal that they cannot with any propriety be called by either name, but are best termed romances. But in these three plays, especially in *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It,* we have pure comedy in its most typical Shakespearian form.

For comedy, in Shakespeare, never aims merely or primarily at the ludicrous. It is not broad or farcical. It admits little mere buffoonery and little grotesque incident. It makes you smile inwardly, but not laugh aloud. Even in his very earliest plays, the effect of comedy is gained not by exhibiting caricature or oddity of character or by farcical incident, but rather by showing us affectations such as we all put on occasionally, sentiments passing into pretty forms of sentimentality, the varying play of moods, the sprightly sallies of wit, and the droll self-importance of stupidity. In these more mature comedies we have a wider experience and so quicker perception and deeper enjoyment of all the humorous phases of life, while there is still less of mere incident or eccentricity. Plays like *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It* are not comedies of laughter, but comedies of gladness. They are the poetry of health, of cheerfulness, of vigor. They seem to me the best expression we have in literature of the full joyousness of living. They awaken in us those thoughts, emotions, and sentiments, that most minister to a refined and healthful happiness, and

they portray in others with charming humor but without any bitterness those peculiar and humorous phases of character that make up so large a part of the innocent pleasures of observation. Take, for instance, two such characters as Rosalind and Jaques in the play before us. What a refreshment in the mere presence of Rosalind! She is like a spring morning; she makes all life seem new and gladsome to us, and we hardly know how. And Jaques,—or *Jac-ques* as I suppose we must call him since Shakespeare does,—what an immense deal of quiet enjoyment one can get out of him. There is nothing boldly pronounced in the depiction of his character, but what a peculiar and subtly humorous individuality it is! Yet neither of these characters ministers directly to our sense of the ludicrous; they 'tickle us about the heart root,' as Chaucer says somewhere, but they do not tempt us much to laughter.

In such comedy as this love will of course usually furnish the motive upon which the action turns, since without love a life of exquisite gladness is hardly conceivable. It is under the influence of the gentle passion in some of its manifold phases that all the charms and graces of character blossom out most freely. And we must admit, too, that it also warms into humorous activity all the pleasant affectations and whimsicalities; as an old writer would say, it doth greatly breed humors. Think what a various company of lovers we have in these three plays,—Rosalind, bright, witty; Orlando, modest yet poetical; the Duke of *Twelfth Night,* sentimental and dreamy—in love with being in love; Viola, gentle, tender, and wise; Beatrice, with that tart tongue of hers that, we are sure, made life racy for Benedick the rest of his days; Malvolio, the inimitable, who never felt his own worth till his lady seemed to shine upon it; Touchstone, who is so determined not to be blinded by any illusions of beauty that he deliberately chooses the ugliest rustic lass he can find,—this is not half the list. And in all it is love that sets in motion whatever in them is most graceful and humorous. The comedy must end happily: but in the course of that true love which we shall not expect

always to run smoothly, there will be abundant opportunity to show some touches of that pathos of self-denial and quiet suffering which lends a moral charm to our comedy and proves its love to be strong as well as sweet. When we have love and all the pretty humors born of love, we must have poetry and music; we shall find in these plays some of Shakespeare's most luxuriant description and his most delicious imagery, while the songs scattered through them are the most dainty and tuneful he ever wrote:

> It was a lover and his lass,
> With a hey, and a ho, and a hey nonino,
> That o'er the green corn-field did pass
> In the spring time, the only pretty ring time,
> When birds do sing, hey ding a ding, ding;
> Sweet lovers love the spring.

But these comedies are not, like *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* an exercise in airy and sportive fancy, a revel in all forms of the beautiful for its own sake. Shakespeare came to their composition when he was just reaching the prime of his early manhood. The experience of ten years had not been lost upon him. The plays impress us at once as much wiser than his early comedies. There is a penetration and thoughtfulness in them that we do not see in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* The charm of the principal characters, like Rosalind and Beatrice, is largely an intellectual one. The plays are full of the most pithy and sententious observations. If they have not that ripeness, that almost over-fulness of meaning and of feeling that one finds in the latest plays, they clearly mark a period when Shakespeare's intellectual powers were in their prime—he was about thirty-eight, you remember—and his life, not yet brought under the shadow of any great sorrow or any great doubt still felt the buoyant joyousness of youth.

Of the three comedies most would, I think, select as the best either the *Twelfth Night* or the *As You Like It,* but as between these two I suspect there would be much difference of opinion. One likes best the one he has read last; on

which ground I am now inclined to prefer the *As You Like It*. But whether the *As You Like It* be the best of Shakespeare's comedies or not, I am quite sure that it is the most typical, the purest example of that kind of comedy which Shakespeare preferred. There is certainly less variety in it and less contrast than in the *Twelfth Night*. There is no loud mirth in it like that of Aguecheek and Sir Toby, no broadly ridiculous affectations like those of Malvolio, no such intensity of feeling as sometimes seems to suffuse for a moment the gracious talk of Viola. It seems as if Shakespeare would not venture to disturb the romantic charm of this play of *As You Like It* by admitting to it any broad humor whatever; and while he made it serious as well as gladsome, he would allow no strain of real sadness to invade its music. In *As You Like It* everything is airy, refined, romantic. And I have always thought in the name he gave it Shakespeare meant to indicate, among other things, his confidence that this time, at least, we must like his work.

We know where he found the plot of the play so far as it has any plot. Among that half score of young fellows who in the decade between 1580 and 1590 managed to combine the parts of scholar, adventurer, and poet was one Thomas Lodge. He began as a writer of rather overpretty lyrics, tried some dramas not very successfully, and after a wild and roving youth, gave up literature and sobered himself into a physician. His most fortunate literary attempts were long pastoral romances, a kind of fiction then much in vogue, of which Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* is the best known example. The rough and boisterous spirits of the day seemed to delight in imaginations of a delicious sylvan country where all impossible beauties were heaped in endless profusion. Of Lodge's romances the best is one he wrote on shipboard, while voyaging in the tropics for glory and booty under one Captain Clarke. "To beguile the time with labor," says he, "I writ this book; rough as hatched in the storms of the ocean and feathered in the surges of many perilous seas, . . . when every line was wet with a surge, and every humorous passion counterchecked

with a storm." This romance of *Rosalynde,* printed in 1590, is the book in which Shakespeare found the whole plot of *As You Like It.* The forest, the banished duke, the banished brother, and the banished maiden who masquerades in male attire with the faithful cousin who shares her exile, the old servant Adam, the lover who carves his verses on the trees,—all these, with other minor incidents, Shakespeare found ready to his hand in Lodge's book. From Lodge's book, too, he may have gained besides the plot and the names of his personages some faint suggestion of that exquisite pastoral atmosphere so delightful in his play; but he could hardly have got anything more than that. The characters of his play are entirely of his own creation, and for three of them, Jaques, Touchstone, and Audrey, he found no hint in the romance of Lodge, or anywhere else, so far as we know. And it need hardly be said the felicities of diction, the wealth of wisdom, wit, and imagination in the play are entirely his own.

The central purpose in the plot of the play is to select a company of people of characteristics sufficiently varied to produce pleasing dramatic contrasts, and then to place these people in such circumstances as shall remove at once the restraints and conventions of an artificial society and leave each one free to follow the impulses of his nature. These lords and ladies are placed in the sunny glades of the forest of Arden and left to do as they like. The object of the poet is not, primarily, to contrast the artificial life of courts with the natural life of the country,—it isn't a pretty object-lesson in Rousseau,—for the banished duke, and Orlando, and the ladies all carry with them into the forest characters that have been formed under the pressure of active life and have known care and sorrow. Still less did Shakespeare have any purpose to show that ministry of nature to uplift and purify human thought of which in more recent poetry we have, perhaps, heard quite enough,—that is a modern Wordsworthian notion. No, Shakespeare's purpose was simply to give us a picture of life in such idyllic surroundings as we all dream of, but never find. It would

be something, we often think, to be well out of Mrs. Grundy's neighborhood, to begin with. It is much more to be released from the constant stress and urgency, to be out of the care and fret, the dull routine that makes life not only toilsome but prosaic. We never quite get rid of a primitive sylvan impulse: it is this that makes pastoral and idyllic poetry always; it is some vague and groping form of this desire that will lead half of us in the next two months to abandon the comforts of civilization and brave the terrors of country board, or lead some—wiser and more fortunate—into the solitudes of the Maine woods or the Adirondacks. Yet we do not really wish to forego the graces of intellect and manners. If we think we can surrender some of the comforts, we cannot give up the amenities of life. Our ideal pastoral country must not lie in the land of the Philistines. The wit and wisdom, the brilliant converse, the beauty and graces, of society, along with the freedom, the freshness, and joyance of nature,—where shall we find that combination? Where? Why in the Forest of Arden. In these cool woodland spaces, where the interlacing shadows dance upon the dewy ground, and the deer come down to the brawling brooks to drink, here is a little company of people who have brought hither all the urbanity that courts can teach and all the sober thoughtfulness that long and varied experience can give, but who find here the burden of convention and artificiality lifted off at once, so that all natural impulses can blossom out without restraint, and they can "fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden world." When you and I try to picture life as we should like it, doesn't the forest of Arden come oftenest to our thought?

Under the greenwood tree
Who loves to lie with me,
And tune his merry note
Unto the sweet bird's throat,
Come hither, come hither, come hither!
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather.

There's not much action in the play—as, indeed, why should there be? There is nothing to be done in the forest of Arden. That is the charm of it; here feel we not the penalty of Adam. Yet there is no monotony or dull inaction, for the play sparkles with wit and life from beginning to end. The interest, therefore, arises mostly from what is said, and from a kind of sprightly and gladsome feeling that seems to pervade the play, without coming into expression much more prominently at any one point than another.

The first act serves for little more than to get Orlando and Rosalind in love with each other, and to get all the people fairly started for the forest. At the opening of the play, you remember, the usurping Duke, Frederick, has already driven his elder brother, the real Duke, into exile. Rosalind, the daughter of this banished Duke, however, still remains with her cousin Celia at the court of her usurping uncle, until Frederick, getting to dislike her as a constant reminder of his injustice to her father, commands her also to leave the court, and she goes, with her cousin Celia and the court fool, Touchstone, to the forest of Arden, whither her father has preceded her. The other bad man of the play, Oliver, is of the same unfraternal temper, withholds from his younger brother, Orlando, the share of the paternal estate due him, treats him with studied rudeness, and soon manages to inveigle him into a match with Duke Frederick's wrestler, which he thinks will be the death of him. But Orlando throws the vaunting wrestler, at the same time catching the fancy of Rosalind, who is looking on. And a little later, learning that his brother is plotting against him, he, too, with the trusty servant, Adam, goes out to complete the company of exiles in the forest of Arden. Shakespeare is not careful to portray very clearly the characters of these two men who are so hard-hearted toward their brothers, because he wishes to concentrate our attention upon the group in the forest. He is, however, concerned to give us at least a glimpse of the real character of Oliver, since he is to introduce him again, in the last part of the play, you remember, as the lover of Celia. We are

made to see, therefore, just what is the motive of Oliver's hatred for Orlando. Oliver is naturally haughty, reserved, and so unpopular. Nobody likes him, and nobody gives him credit even for what good there is in him. And so, as often happens with such men, his unpopularity changes his reserve into moroseness and suspicion. His brother, Orlando, on the contrary, is open, affable, and sunny-tempered, wins golden opinions from all sorts of people. It is almost inevitable that Oliver should envy Orlando, and natural that he should envy him all the more because Orlando accepts his envy with quiet indifference which seems to imply a conscious superiority. Oliver lets out the real cause of his hatred in a bit of soliloquy, after he has been plotting with the wrestler to get rid of his brother:

> I hope I shall see an end of him; for my soul, yet I know not why, hates nothing more than he. Yet he's gentle; never school'd, and yet learned; full of noble device; of all sorts enchantingly beloved; and indeed so much in the heart of the world, and especially of my own people, who best know him, that I am altogether misprised.

Envy like this will never be broken by resentment or indifference, but you will observe what a fine touch of truth and nature it is that this brother when, in the last act, he is given a sudden and overwhelming proof of the wronged Orlando's forgiving temper should melt down at once, and take his brother to his heart. Still more true is the poetic judgment that makes this mistrustful and jealous-tempered man, when first in his life he feels the power of one generous love, open his heart to another, and find a fascination in the straightforward, practical Celia.

Dr. Johnson, in his few words of comment on this play, says with a rather ponderous attempt at archness of manner, "I know not how the ladies will approve the facility with which Rosalind and Celia give away their hearts." Shakespeare by his practice in many of his plays manifestly leans towards the opinion he makes Phœbe quote from Marlowe,

Who ever loved, that loved not at first sight?

Divers philosophers, I believe, have held the same view,—as for instance Coleridge, who, however, never did love. But some things can be said in explanation of Rosalind's precipitancy. Not only is Orlando as proper a young man as you will find on a summer's day, modest, open, and noble, but his situation when first Rosalind sees him is such as to appeal strongly to her sympathy,—a manly and winning young fellow, without funds, about to be knocked in the head by a prize-fighter. Her own misfortunes give her a sudden sense of kinship with him. But I take it that nothing will change pity into that love to which it is said to be akin so quickly as the conviction that as pity it is no longer called for. When the young Orlando sets the broken music in the sides of the bonny priser of the Duke and proves himself as stout as he is gentle, we see that Rosalind is won. The matter of fact Celia steps forward at once to congratulate him:

Sir, you have well deserv'd.
If you do keep your promises in love
But justly, as you have exceeded all promise,
Your mistress shall be happy.
Ros. Gentleman,
[*Giving him a chain from her neck.*]
Wear this for me, one out of suits with fortune,
That could give more, but that her hand lacks means.
Shall we go, coz?
Cel. Ay. Fare you well, fair gentleman.

But you will notice that it is Rosalind that turns back for a last word. Orlando, as they go out, rebukes himself for his awkward bashfulness:

Can I not say, I thank you? My better parts
Are all thrown down, and that which here stands up
Is but a quintain, a mere lifeless block.

He is speaking to himself. Rosalind knows it, but glad of any pretext to turn back an instant, she says with a blush:

He calls us back. My pride fell with my fortunes;
I'll ask him what he would. Did you call, sir?
Sir, you have wrestled well, and overthrown
More than your enemies.
CEL. Will you go, coz?
ROS. Have with you. Fare you well.

That moment's hesitation between her modesty and the frank impulse of admiration is a revelation. Shakespeare would give us a glimpse into the true woman's heart of Rosalind which we shall not forget. In the forest of Arden we are to see her in doublet and hose, with a wit as nimble as Atalanta's heels, but we are to understand at the outset that her character is not at bottom frivolous or flippant, but sound, serious, and womanly. She is too healthy for moodiness or melancholy, but the bits of dialogue in the First Act, show us that, though she bears it cheerfully, she still feels the heavy lot that has left her almost friendless on the bounty of the man who has banished her father. In the pretty bit of confidence with Celia just before she is exiled, her bright humor is mixed with some sense of weariness and anxiety like April sunshine and cloud:

CEL. Why, cousin! why, Rosalind! Cupid have mercy! not a word?
ROS. Not one to throw at a dog.
CEL. No, thy words are too precious to be cast away upon curs; throw some of them at me. Come, lame me with reasons.
ROS. Then there were two cousins laid up, when the one should be lam'd with reasons and the other mad without any.
CEL. But is all this for your father?
ROS. No, some of it is for my child's father. O, how full of briers is this working-day world!
CEL. They are but burs, cousin, thrown upon thee in holiday foolery. If we walk not in the trodden paths, our very petticoats will catch them.
ROS. I could shake them off my coat. These burs are in my heart.
CEL. Hem them away.
ROS. I would try, if I could hem and have him.
CEL. Come, come, wrestle with thy affections.
ROS. O, they take the part of a better wrestler than myself!
CEL. . . . But, turning these jests out of service, let us talk in

good earnest. Is it possible, on such a sudden you should fall into so strong a liking with old Sir Roland's youngest son?

Ros. The Duke my father lov'd his father dearly.

Cel. Doth it therefore ensue that you should love his son dearly? By this kind of chase, I should hate him, for my father hated his father dearly; yet I hate not Orlando.

Ros. No, faith, hate him not, for my sake.

And you will remember what the usurping Duke says of her to Celia when he is trying to excuse his own harshness:

> She is too subtle for thee; and her smoothness,
> Her very silence, and her patience
> Speak to the people, and they pity her.

When we meet her in the forest masquerading like a pert and saucy lacquey, and playing the knave with Orlando, we shall know that in truth she has no doublet and hose in her disposition.

But it is time that we should go to the forest. The banished Duke is the first person we meet there:

> Now, my co-mates and brothers in exile,
> Hath not old custom made this life more sweet
> Than that of painted pomp? Are not these woods
> More free from peril than the envious court?
> Here feel we not the penalty of Adam,
> The seasons' difference, as the icy fang
> And churlish chiding of the winter's wind,
> Which, when it bites and blows upon my body,
> Even till I shrink with cold, I smile and say,
> "This is no flattery: these are counsellors
> That feelingly persuade me what I am."
> Sweet are the uses of adversity,
> Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
> Wears yet a precious jewel in his head;
> And this our life, exempt from public haunt,
> Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.

Of this good Duke we see but little, these lines being nearly half of all he utters during the play, yet we feel we know him very well. This man has tried life in all its phases, and

found it all a discipline of virtue. It is because he has schooled his soul to faith and charity, has

> with holy bell been knoll'd to church,
> And sat at good men's feasts, and wip'd [his] eyes
> Of drops that sacred pity hath engend'red,

that he can find the woodland life so calm and so full of food for kindly thoughts. Though deposed and banished there is nothing sour or gloomy in his temper, and glimpses of genial humor and poetry of spirit remind us that he is the father of Rosalind. "I met the Duke yesterday," says Rosalind, who has not yet discovered herself to her father. "I met the Duke and had much question with him. He asked me of what parentage I was. I told him, of as good as he; so he laugh'd and let me go." And I think it is pleasant that his most constant companion is the light-tempered Amiens who sings the charming songs.

But by far the most interesting person in the Duke's little company is Jaques. What an original, juicy character he is! A man whom it is rather hard to analyze—real men usually are—but who always piques your curiosity and whom you remember like an old acquaintance. Jaques, I take it, is a curious compound of a cynic and a sentimentalist. He is old,—"the old gentleman," says Phebe,—and the Duke says he has been too free a liver. But the Duke is always a little hard upon him, and we need not conclude that Jaques had sunk himself in any very debasing vices. But he has led an aimless life of adventure, seeking pleasure in all forms; and he has found, of course, that pleasure sought for too eagerly soon palls. Unlike all the rest of the company he has never known any central purpose or made life a serious thing; and so unlike all the rest he finds no exhilaration in this free woodland leisure. He has traveled from Dan to Beersheba and found it all barren. Jaques is blasé. "It is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples . . . ; and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous

sadness." Having now got beyond the relish of most pleasures himself, he finds a perverse comfort in exposing the vanity of pleasure in others. Yet there is no moral soundness in his rebukes; nothing but the languid satiety of the man who assures you with superiority that he has been through all that. To preach *vanitas vanitatum* never converted anybody yet, I suppose; and most such preachers have a kind of lingering fondness for the experiences they exhort you to avoid, and take a seductive pleasure in the melancholy retrospect. That was the case with Jaques: and that was the reason why the sound-hearted Duke, as you remember, thinks he had better not set up for a reformer:

> DUKE. Fie on thee! I can tell what thou wouldst do.
> JAQ. What, for a counter, would I do, but good?
> DUKE. Most mischievous foul sin, in chiding sin.

But though Jaques is something of a cynic, he is more of a sentimentalist. Your healthy man puts his sentiments at once into practice without stopping to think about them; emotions with him are motives as they ought to be; but your sentimentalist collects beautiful sentiments like a connoisseur to gloat over them and invites his emotions merely for the luxury of feeling them. And this seems to me exactly the case with Jaques. He loves to titillate his sensibilities, and to taste the delicacy of a new emotion. You remember the graceful pathos of one of his moody reveries:

> as he lay along
> Under an oak whose antique root peeps out
> Upon the brook that brawls along this wood;
> To the which place a poor sequest'red stag,
> That from the hunter's aim had ta'en a hurt,
> Did come to languish; and, indeed, my lord,
> The wretched animal heav'd forth such groans,
> That their discharge did stretch his leathern coat
> Almost to bursting, and the big round tears
> Cours'd one another down his innocent nose
> In piteous chase; and thus the hairy fool,
> Much marked of the melancholy Jaques,

Stood on the extremest verge of the swift brook,
Augmenting it with tears.
DUKE S. But what said Jaques?
Did he not moralize this spectacle?
1ST LORD. O, yes, into a thousand similes,

weeping and commenting on the sobbing deer. But his appetite has become so jaded that it takes something of piquant flavor to stir it. Sound healthy men bore him. That accounts for his aversion to the Duke. The Duke "hath been all this day to look you," says Amiens; whereupon Jaques, "And I have been all this day to avoid him. He is too disputable for my company. I think of as many matters as he; but I give heaven thanks, and make no boast of them." For Orlando he has a kind of humorous pity, since Orlando is "green and happy in first love, and thankful for illusion." Once only he finds a specimen that is a genuine novelty in human nature. After he has met Touchstone, he enters fairly quivering with delight:

A fool, a fool! I met a fool i' the forest,
A motley fool. A miserable world!
As I do live by food, I met a fool;
Who laid him down and bask'd him in the sun,
And rail'd on Lady Fortune in good terms,
In good set terms, and yet a motley fool.
"Good morrow, fool," quoth I. "No, sir," quoth he,
"Call me not fool till heaven hath sent me fortune."
And then he drew a dial from his poke,
And, looking on it with lack-lustre eye,
Says very wisely, "It is ten o'clock.
Thus we may see," quoth he, "how the world wags.
'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine;
And after one hour more 't will be eleven;
And so, from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,
And then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot;
And thereby hangs a tale." When I did hear
The motley fool thus moral on the time,
My lungs began to crow like chanticleer,
That fools should be so deep-contemplative;
And I did laugh sans intermission
An hour by this dial. O noble fool!
A worthy fool! Motley's the only wear.

DUKE S. What fool is this?
JAQ. O worthy fool! One that hath been a courtier,
And says, if ladies be but young and fair,
They have the gift to know it; and in his brain,
Which is as dry as the remainder biscuit
After a voyage, he hath strange places cramm'd
With observation, the which he vents
In mangled forms. O that I were a fool!
I am ambitious for a motley coat.

Such a man as Jaques makes a poor friend, for your thorough-going sentimentalist is the most selfish of mortals, —he couldn't afford to keep so many beautiful sentiments if he felt obliged to act upon them. But though a poor friend, he may make a very agreeable companion. Jaques certainly is. His melancholy casts no gloom on any one, for it is evident that it is only a humorous sadness which he himself vastly enjoys. He has naturally exquisite tastes, and he has never done anything but cultivate them. He loves music, though he "can suck melancholy out of a song, as a weasle sucks eggs," and, when he is in his moods, there is a vein of quaint humor in him infinitely diverting. As the Duke says, he is "very full of matter." When the play closes he drifts away to seek the last bit of curious psychology he has heard of,—the wicked Duke that has suddenly got converted:

JAQ. Sir, by your patience. If I heard you rightly,
The Duke hath put on a religious life
And thrown into neglect the pompous court?
JAQ. DE B. He hath.
JAQ. To him will I. Out of these convertites
There is much matter to be heard and learn'd.

He is Shakespeare's picture of the man who thinks the whole great struggle of human life goes on in order that he may make a variety of interesting observations upon it, and remark that

all the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players.

He is very interesting, but I think Shakespeare's verdict upon him, and that of most healthy people, is Rosalind's: Yes, you have gained your experience,—

> And your experience makes you sad. I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad; and to travel for it too!

In the *As You Like It* we certainly do have a delightful fool to make us merry. It is a pity that we have no better name than Fool to give to Shakespeare's professed jesters, for some of them are among the wisest of his personages, and one—the Fool in *Lear,* that most true and tender-hearted man whose laughter has always in it the ripple of tears—is surely one of the most profound and most pathetic characters Shakespeare ever drew. After him, I think the Touchstone of our play stands next. Wit, whimsicality, a disposition to trip up the heels of your speech on all occasions, love of song, quaint fancy, a kind of chartered impudence, and, through it all, glimpses of gentleness that make you love the fellow after all. He is kind, for among the first words we hear him speak are words of pity for the poor fellow whose ribs the wrestler has just broken; he is of strong affections, for Celia says he will go along over the wide world with her. He has a grave philosophic tone which gives to the commonplace that air of droll solemnity that pleased Jaques so much, but underneath his droll waggery there is a deal of hard sense. He has kept his eyes open, and, as Jaques says, in his brain there are strange places crammed with observation. Naturally he is a very open and unworldly fellow, only he has so accustomed himself to find out the whimsical side of everything that now he doesn't care much for any other. Sidney Smith once said that the difference between a Scotchman and other men is that the Scotchman always says what is undermost in his mind, and I think something like that is true of Touchstone. No one of the exiles, you see, finds the woodland life so novel as this fool whose life has been spent in making jests for a court. It has, indeed, a good many inconveniences, and he

isn't quite sure whether, on the whole, he likes it,—but it is very new:

Cor. And how like you this shepherd's life, Master Touchstone?

Touch. Truly, shepherd, in respect of itself, it is a good life; but in respect that it is a shepherd's life, it is naught. In respect that it is solitary, I like it very well; but in respect that it is private, it is a very vile life. Now, in respect it is in the fields, it pleaseth me well; but in respect it is not in the court, it is tedious. As it is a spare life, look you, it fits my humour well; but as there is no more plenty in it, it goes much against my stomach. Hast any philosophy in thee, shepherd?

But this strange life does seem to put new sap and greenness into him, and to force into bloom all the poetry and humor of his nature. Here in Arden he is no more a fool than all the rest. And as this love-making that is going on all about him seems to be a charming form of diversion, he catches the mania too. The wooing of Touchstone and Audrey is almost as delightful in its way as that of Orlando and Rosalind, and of course the one pair of lovers is set over against the other in humorous contrast. Touchstone, I take it, begins his wooing out of pure whimsicality, because Audrey seems to him like a constant joke. For you will note that Touchstone is the only one of the exiles who takes any real interest in the rustics that are native to the forest; the world of lords and ladies he knows well enough, but he has never seen anything like these people before, and he finds them vastly diverting. It seems that Touchstone, following the example of his betters, had sent some love rhymes, which he calls as they were sometimes then called a *feature,* but which Audrey, probably for lack of letters, did but poorly appreciate:—

Touch. Come apace, good Audrey. I will fetch up your goats, Audrey. And how, Audrey, am I the man yet? Doth my simple feature content you?

Aud. Your features! Lord warrant us! what features?

Touch. I am here with thee and thy goats, as the most capricious poet, honest Ovid, was among the Goths.

JAQ. (*Aside*) O knowledge ill-inhabited, worse than Jove in a thatch'd house!

TOUCH. When a man's verses cannot be understood, nor a man's good wit seconded with the forward child, understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room. Truly, I would the gods had made thee poetical.

AUD. I do not know what "poetical" is. Is it honest in deed and word? Is it a true thing?

TOUCH. No, truly; for the truest poetry is the most feigning; and lovers are given to poetry, and what they swear in poetry may be said as lovers they do feign.

AUD. Do you wish then that the gods had made me poetical?

TOUCH. I do, truly; for thou swearest to me thou art honest. Now, if thou wert a poet, I might have some hope thou didst feign.

. . . . . .

AUD. Well, I am not fair; and therefore I pray the gods make me honest.

TOUCH. Truly, and to cast away honesty upon a foul slut were to put good meat into an unclean dish.

AUD. I am not a slut, though I thank the gods I am foul.

TOUCH. Well, praised be the gods for thy foulness! Sluttishness may come hereafter. But be it as it may be, I will marry thee.

But we are not to think Touchstone's courtship a mere piece of waggery throughout. He falls some way into love before he is through with it. He has to dispose of a rival, and that stimulates his liking considerably, I suppose; and then Audrey plainly develops new charms of character if not of person. She is proud of her suitor and determined not to lose him:

TOUCH. To-morrow is the joyful day, Audrey; to-morrow will we be married.

AUD. I do wish it with all my heart; and I hope it is no dishonest desire to desire to be a woman of the world.

Touchstone will be obeyed and will be flattered; that is evident, and I believe these are sometimes said to be the first conditions of happiness in the married life. "What a man mostly wants of a wife," says Mrs. Poyser, "is to make sure of one fool as'll tell him he's wise." And then we do not forget the vein of real honesty and goodness underneath Touchstone's quiet exterior; so that at the end I think our wedding

congratulations may be extended to Touchstone and Audrey about as safely as to either of the other happy couples.

But after all, the interest of the comedy centers about Rosalind,—"high-hearted Rosalind, kindling with sunshine the dusk greenwood." It is manifestly not necessary or desirable that we should all of us like the same woman in Shakespeare, any more than out of Shakespeare. For my own part, if I had to choose among them all, I should say without hesitation, that the woman in Shakespeare most altogether lovely is Imogen, who combines sweetness, strength, and wisdom as no other. But if the question be which one of Shakespeare's maiden heroines is most engaging, I fancy most readers would be likely to say Rosalind. Which one of the whole noble company would you so much like to meet? Ophelia is lovely, but weak; Cordelia we should reverence as a thing enskyed and sainted; Isabella is high and severe; Portia is just a grain too wise; Juliet one cannot think of save as a lover; Miranda and Perdita are indeed two charming young maids, but as yet they are only in the bud of womanhood; Jessica is too volatile and girlish; Beatrice, I for one should be a little afraid of; Viola—ah there is indeed no one, perhaps, more winning than she, and she has a vein of pensive poetry that I do not find in Rosalind, but her timid grace would shrink from casual acquaintance: I believe after all it would be Rosalind. Orlando is certainly one of the luckiest young fellows in Shakespeare.

And yet it is not the predominance of any particular quality that makes Rosalind so attractive but the harmony of so many in a healthy, well-balanced nature. For the first impression Rosalind makes upon one is that of perfect health, physical and mental. And she has that kind of health which is actually contagious; it's an inspiration to be in her company. She always makes me think of Shelley's line,

> With thy clear, keen joyance
> Languor cannot be.

Nothing can break the elasticity of her temper. Even in moments of weariness and depression her humor bubbles up

in some playful jest. "O Jupiter, how weary are my spirits!" she cries as at last she reaches the forest, in her disguise, just in time to see Celia sink down exhausted at her feet.

> I could find in my heart to disgrace my man's apparel and to cry like a woman; but I must comfort the weaker vessel, as doublet and hose ought to show itself courageous to petticoat; therefore, courage, good Aliena.

And the novelty and freshness of this woodland life seem to exhilarate her. To play this part of pert and saucy lacquey stimulates her wit and roguishness to the utmost; she was never so sprightly and never so charming. And when a lucky fate drives Orlando into the forest too, every nerve in her finely-strung nature is a-dance with healthy joy:

> look here what I found on a palm tree. I never was so berhym'd since Pythagoras' time, that I was an Irish rat, which I can hardly remember.
>
> CEL. Trow you who hath done this?
>
> ROS. Is it a man?
>
> CEL. And a chain, that you once wore, about his neck. Change you colour?
>
> ROS. I prithee, who?
>
> CEL. O Lord, Lord! it is a hard matter for friends to meet; but mountains may be removed with earthquakes and so encounter.
>
> ROS. Nay, but who is it?
>
> CEL. Is it possible?
>
> ROS. Nay, I prithee now with most petitionary vehemence, tell me who it is.
>
> CEL. O wonderful, wonderful, and most wonderful wonderful! and yet again wonderful, and after that, out of all whooping!
>
> ROS. Good my complexion! dost thou think, though I am caparison'd like a man, I have a doublet and hose in my disposition? One inch of delay more is a South-sea of discovery. I prithee, tell me who it is quickly, and speak apace.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Is he of God's making? What manner of man? Is his head worth a hat or his chin worth a beard?
>
> CEL. Nay, he hath but a little beard.
>
> ROS. Why, God will send more, if the man will be thankful. Let me stay the growth of his beard, if thou delay me not the knowledge of his chin.

CEL. It is young Orlando, that tripp'd up the wrestler's heels and your heart both in an instant.

ROS. Nay, but the devil take mocking. Speak sad brow and true maid.

CEL. I' faith, coz, 'tis he.

ROS. Orlando?

CEL. Orlando.

ROS. Alas the day! what shall I do with my doublet and hose? What did he when thou saw'st him? What said he? How look'd he? Wherein went he? What makes he here? Did he ask for me? Where remains he? How parted he with thee? And when shalt thou see him again? Answer me in one word.

CEL. You must borrow me Gargantua's mouth first. 'Tis a word too great for any mouth of this age's size. To say ay and no to these particulars is more than to answer in a catechism.

ROS. But doth he know that I am in this forest and in man's apparel? Looks he as freshly as he did the day he wrestled?

But it is not merely the sprightliness of health and high spirits that delights us in Rosalind. Her charm, as I have already said, is an intellectual one. There is no wit in Shakespeare more nimble and fluent. And she is as wise as she is witty. I think Rosalind's talk is the best in the world. It fairly dances with wit and gayety; and it is very wise and pithy too, but its wisdom is not put up in cut and dried maxims. Only bores talk those. Rosalind's wisdom is unconscious and incidental, bits of shrewd observation and comment that sparkle in the laughing stream of her talk. And this talk of Rosalind's is not only full of sense, but of sensibility, too. It is all suffused with healthy emotion, and every now and then in the midst of its playful mirth there is some word of serious tenderness straight from her woman's heart. She is a sound-hearted, healthy woman of full-veined humanity, with no prudery or sentimentality, self-poised, independent, versatile: but in all her masquerading in doublet and hose, she never for a moment loses the fineness and delicacy of her woman's nature. Her sensibilities are, indeed, much more delicate than those of Celia; and if she does not yield so easily to depression it is because her will is so firm and humor so natural to her that she can force even her most melancholy moods to wear a smiling face. And

how admirable is all her dialogue with Orlando. How she enjoys calling out his conferences, rallying his rather moonish sentiment with her saucy badinage, tormenting him by roguish confessions of her own which he can never guess are really from the heart of his very Rosalind. And yet when her talk is most pert and saucy, how far is it from being loud and bold. So much of woman's wit, and grace, and sweetness is there in it, that one almost wonders Orlando didn't find her out,—he couldn't have disguised himself from her so, you may be sure. She has always a fear that he may detect her. That is what makes her raillery so exhilarating; it is the spice of danger that gives zest to her sportiveness. Sometimes her real love will speak in spite of herself in some word of timid pathos which she can only half conceal,—

"But are you so much in love as your rhymes speak?"—and then she fears that he will guess her secret, and she goes on with a gush of her liveliest banter:

> . . . There is a man haunts the forest, that abuses our young plants with carving Rosalind on their barks; hangs odes upon hawthornes and elegies upon brambles; all, forsooth, deifying the name of Rosalind. If I could meet that fancy-monger, I would give him some good counsel, for he seems to have the quotidian of love upon him.
>
> ORL. I am he that is so love-shak'd. I pray you, tell me your remedy.
>
> ROS. There is none of my uncle's marks upon you. He taught me how to know a man in love, in which cage of rushes I am sure you are not prisoner.
>
> ORL. What were his marks?
>
> ROS. A lean cheek, which you have not; a blue eye and sunken, which you have not; an unquestionable spirit, which you have not; a beard neglected, which you have not; but I pardon you for that, for simply your having in beard is a younger brother's revenue. Then your hose should be ungarter'd, your bonnet unbanded, your sleeve unbutton'd, your shoe unti'd, and every thing about you demonstrating a careless desolation. But you are no such man; you are rather point-device in your accoutrements, as loving yourself than seeming the lover of any other.
>
> ORL. Fair youth, I would that I could make thee believe I love.

Ros. Me believe it! you may as soon make her that you love believe it; which, I warrant, she is apter to do than to confess she does. That is one of the points in the which women still give the lie to their consciences. But, in good sooth, are you he that hangs the verses on the trees, wherein Rosalind is so admired?

Orl. I swear to thee, youth, by the white hand of Rosalind, I am that he, that unfortunate he.

Ros. But are you so much in love as your rhymes speak?

Orl. Neither rhyme nor reason can express how much.

Ros. Love is merely a madness, and, I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do; and the reason why they are not so punish'd and cured is, that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love too.

Indeed they are. For, although with both Rosalind and Orlando, it was a case of love at first sight, I think every one must see that Rosalind is more deeply smitten. Orlando, indeed, protests and sonnetizes most; but Rosalind's is the deeper passion. Hers is, in fact, a much deeper and stronger nature than Orlando's. Ruskin says somewhere that Shakespeare has no heroes, only heroines. Certainly no one has shown so well the helpful strength, the native nobility of woman's nature. No mere gentle plasticity of soul pleased him in woman. Here, it is true, as Ruskin says, that Orlando, noble as he is, would be almost the despairing toy of chance, were he not followed, comforted, saved, by Rosalind. For underneath all her lightness, Rosalind has a high womanly conception of the sacredness of her affection. It is she, you remember, who says almost solemnly to Phebe, who is trying to play the rustic flirt,

> Down on your knees,
> And thank heaven, fasting, for a good man's love.

But there isn't the slightest particle of sentimentality in her love, and she doesn't like to utter it *ore rotundo*. People whose feelings have much depth never do. And so she masks it under that arch and delightful humor. Is there any passage in Shakespeare where the play of changing mood is more charmingly set forth than this? Orlando, you remember, has agreed to woo this youth Rosalind, as if

he thought her—what she really is. He has come tardily, and she has roguishly kept him waiting some moments pretending not to see him while she talks to Jaques. Then she turns:

> Why, how now, Orlando! Where have you been all this while? You a lover! An you serve me such another trick, never come in my sight more.
>
> ORL. My fair Rosalind, I come within an hour of my promise.
>
> ROS. Break an hour's promise in love! He that will divide a minute into a thousand parts, and break but a part of the thousandth part of a minute in the affairs of love, it may be said of him that Cupid hath clapp'd him o' the shoulder, but I'll warrant him heart-whole.
>
> ORL. Pardon me, dear Rosalind.
>
> ROS. Nay, an you be so tardy, come no more in my sight. I had as lief be woo'd of a snail.
>
> ORL. Of a snail?
>
> ROS. Ay, of a snail; for though he comes slowly, he carries his house on his head; a better jointure, I think, than you make a woman. . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Come, woo me, woo me; for now I am in a holiday humour and like enough to consent. What would you say to me now, an I were your very very Rosalind?
>
> ORL. I would kiss before I spoke.
>
> ROS. Nay, you were better speak first; and when you were gravell'd for lack of matter, you might take occasion to kiss. . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> . . . Am not I your Rosalind?
>
> ORL. I take some joy to say you are, because I would be talking of her.
>
> ROS. Well, in her person, I say I will not have you.
>
> ORL. Then in mine own person I die.
>
> ROS. No, faith, die by attorney. The poor world is almost six thousand years old, and in all this time there was not any man died in his own person, videlicet, in a love-cause. Troilus had his brains dash'd out with a Grecian club; yet he did what he could to die before, and he is one of the patterns of love. Leander, he would have liv'd many a fair year though Hero had turn'd nun, if it had not been for a hot mid-summer night; for, good youth, he went but forth to wash him in the Hellespont and being taken with the cramp was drown'd; and the foolish chroniclers of that age found it was—Hero of Sestos. But these are all lies. Men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love.

ORL. I would not have my right Rosalind of this mind; for, I protest, her frown might kill me.

ROS. By this hand, it will not kill a fly. But come, now I will be your Rosalind in a more coming-on disposition; and ask me what you will, I will grant it.

ORL. Then love me, Rosalind.

ROS. Yes, faith, will I, Fridays and Saturdays and all.

ORL. And wilt thou have me?

ROS. Ay, and twenty such.

ORL. What sayest thou?

ROS. Are you not good?

ORL. I hope so.

ROS. Why then, can one desire too much of a good thing? Come, sister, you shall be the priest and marry us. Give me your hand, Orlando. What do you say, sister?

. . . . . .

CEL. I cannot say the words.

ROS. You must begin, "Will you, Orlando"—

CEL. Go to. Will you, Orlando, have to wife this Rosalind?

ORL. I will.

ROS. Ay, but when?

ORL. Why now; as fast as she can marry us.

ROS. Then you must say, "I take thee, Rosalind, for wife."

ORL. I take thee, Rosalind, for wife.

ROS. I might ask you for your commission; but I do take thee, Orlando, for my husband. There's a girl goes before the priest; and certainly a woman's thought runs before her actions.

ORL. So do all thoughts; they are wing'd.

ROS. Now tell me how long you would have her after you have possess'd her.

ORL. For ever and a day.

ROS. Say "a day," without the "ever." No, no, Orlando. Men are April when they woo, December when they wed; maids are May when they are maids, but the sky changes when they are wives. I will be more jealous of thee than a Barbary cock-pigeon over his hen, more clamorous than a parrot against rain, more new-fangled than an ape, more giddy in my desires than a monkey. I will weep for nothing, like Diana in the fountain, and I will do that when you are dispos'd to be merry. I will laugh like a hyen, and that when thou art inclin'd to sleep.

ORL. But will my Rosalind do so?

ROS. By my life, she will do as I do.

ORL. O, but she is wise.

ROS. Or else she could not have the wit to do this. The wiser, the waywarder. Make the doors upon a woman's wit and it will

out at the casement; shut that and 't will out at the key-hole; stop that, 't will fly with the smoke out at the chimney.

. . . . . .

CEL. You have simply misus'd our sex in your love-prate. . . .
ROS. O coz, coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didst know how many fathom deep I am in love!

Surely we can guess. You all remember that scene when Rosalind stands by to hear with trembling heart the story of Orlando's brotherly love and valor, as his brother tells it, until at the sight of the kerchief wet with blood her woman's nature can endure it no longer and she swoons, only to unclose her eyes again in a moment and call out with an attempt at the old saucy manner:

a body would think this was well counterfeited! I pray you, tell your brother how well I counterfeited. Heigh-ho! . . . But, i' faith, I should have been a woman by right.

Counterfeiting after that was impossible, and when next he meets her, I think Orlando has detected her disguise, though with manly dignity and tenderness he will not say so, nor urge any disclosure until she is pleased to make it. Where is there a more charming love story?

I have said nothing of Adam, the old servant, whose fidelity to Orlando is such a proof of Orlando's own goodness, or of Silvius, the type of rustic faith, and Phebe, the mincing, kittenish little rustic flirt, with the jet black hair and bugle-eyeballs, whose witless and heartless attempts at coquetry with Silvius serve to show the more admirably how much there is both of wit and heart in Rosalind.

But something of the charm of the play evaporates in any attempt to analyze its different characters. It is only when we think of it entire, as a picture of fresh woodland health and joy, that we feel its charm. To read it or to remember it is a true refreshment of soul, and brings not only lightsome thoughts but some of that

Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness

of which Wordsworth sings.

Only I must remind you that at the close of the play, Shakespeare sends all his persons back into the world again. We cannot sever permanently our obligations to society, nor hope for very long to fleet the time carelessly as they did in the golden age. Nor would we. No high culture of soul is possible unless we take up our duties in the thick of life, or even any high enjoyment. Delightful as is the Forest of Arden, to stay there always would not be As We Like It.

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

SHAKESPEARE was not a man of many books. I suppose there was nothing at New Place that could by any stretch of logic have been called a library. Yet there were three or four books that he must have known thoroughly, and one of these, perhaps the best known of all, was one of the world's great books,—Plutarch's *Lives*. It is pleasant to be able to be sure that we know in just what translation he read it, and to see again and again not only the thought or the incident but even the language of that admirable old translation appearing in his plays. For I think there has never been a translation of Plutarch whose English can for a moment compare in vigor and dramatic raciness with that old one by Sir Thomas North, 1579, which Shakespeare must have used.

Shakespeare's play of *Antony and Cleopatra* is not merely based on Plutarch's Life of Mark Antony, but it follows Plutarch so closely that it might almost be called a poetic paraphrase. In no one of Shakespeare's plays does he keep so close to his original. In most cases, as you know, he has drawn from his authorities only names and the outline of a plot; here, however, not only the names but the essentials of the character of the Antony, the Cleopatra, the Octavius of the play are all to be found in Plutarch. Enobarbus is perhaps the only person of much importance in the play for whose character Shakespeare did not get many essential hints from Plutarch. And more than this, the events of the play, even the minor and incidental ones that seem as you read them almost certain to have been invented by Shakespeare are, in fact, almost all taken out of Plutarch; so that it is hardly too much to say that there is not a page of the drama in which you cannot find traces of Plutarch either in the incidents or the language.

Yet the art of Shakespeare is hardly less wonderful here than elsewhere. What Plutarch has merely described, he has re-created. Plutarch gives us a very entertaining account of the relations of Antony and Cleopatra; Shakespeare brings the two actually before us in all the abundant energy and passion of warm breathing life. The story has been often told and has been dramatized in almost every literature; but it is still true, I believe, that it is to Shakespeare we must go if we would know the living Cleopatra as she was, and understand all the witchery of her nature. It was left to Shakespeare to make the world acquainted with Cleopatra.

The play is, of course, in some sense a sequel to the *Julius Cæsar;* but it is certain there must have been a considerable interval between them. *Julius Cæsar* is one of the earliest in the great line of tragedies, probably the first; but it is clear both from external and internal evidence that the *Antony and Cleopatra* must be put somewhat later. In manner it is akin to Shakespeare's very latest work. For Shakespeare as he grew older seems to have grown more and more careless of mere regularity of form, and more and more full and rich in the content of his language. It must be admitted, I should think, that the construction of this play of *Antony and Cleopatra* is very far from perfect. In the endeavor to follow Plutarch closely Shakespeare has confused the action of the play, broken it up into small pieces,—there are thirteen scenes in the Third Act and fifteen in the Fourth Act, you remember,—and scattered it all the way from Rome to Parthia. Perhaps, indeed, he does in this way give us an idea of the extent and variety of the interests which depended upon Antony, and which he sacrificed to the enchantress of Egypt; yet it seems to me that by reducing somewhat the number of minor characters and concentrating the action in masses he might have given to the form of the play greater unity and strength. But if the play be somewhat faulty in structure, its style, on the other hand, is that of Shakespeare's ripest period,—full, energetic, swift, sententious. In point of style, indeed, I sometimes think it is his very best play. There are scattered through it passages of profound

reflection, bits of pithy wisdom that drop like fruitful seed into the mind. Yet *Antony and Cleopatra* is not the tragedy of thought but the tragedy of passion, and the best excellences of its style are such as we should expect in such a play. It is a style of passionate vigor and audacity. It abounds in passages in which thought and emotion seem fused in some glowing phrase that makes our ordinary English seem cold and diffuse. Coleridge puts it well when he speaks of the "happy valiancy of style" in this play as compared with Shakespeare's other works. There is an eastern opulence and prodigality in its sensuous imagery, an intensity and desperation in its passion, under which language fairly seems to strain and sway. Any one familiar with the course of Shakespeare's work must feel sure, it seems to me, that the *Antony and Cleopatra* belongs to the period of his greatest wisdom and vigor. .

Coleridge—to whose fragmentary notes I frequently refer because they seem to me more suggestive than any other —says that "of all Shakespeare's historical plays *Antony and Cleopatra* is by far the most wonderful." Other good critics have pronounced it the greatest of all his tragedies. It is perhaps idle to attempt to fix, in this way, the relative rank of Shakespeare's great dramas; but it has always seemed to me that the impression the *Antony and Cleopatra* leaves upon us is peculiar, and in some respects unlike that we get from any other of Shakespeare's works. For my own part, I think I must say that no one of all Shakespeare's plays exerts a greater fascination upon me while I am reading it. Whether one will or no, it captivates the imagination, stirs the blood, and hurries one out of himself. As I read the story of Antony's final unavailing struggle with his passion for the serpent of old Nile, of his last gaudy night and the desperation of the next day, I can never sit still in my chair. But when one puts down the book, the spell is broken. I think the play does not take hold upon our thought so powerfully, or so often steal into our reflection as many others do. Antony and Cleopatra are not the companions of our quiet hours, as Hamlet and Desdemona and Rosalind, and even

Hotspur and Falstaff, are. While we move with them through the drama they captivate our senses and imagination, sum up all that is gorgeous and ensnaring, but they do not visit our reverie or enliven our solitude. And I suppose a moment's thought will show why this must be so. This is a tragedy of passion, and passion is by its very nature, spasmodic, fitful, transient. We are not merely to be told what is the power of Cleopatra, we must be made to feel it ourselves. Shakespeare actually makes us pass for a time under the spell of her magic, that we may know in what strong toil of grace Antony is entangled. But this fascination gets so little hold upon intellect or reflection that when we emerge from it, the play leaves less in our recollections than many others do. This may be all a fancy of mine,—but so it has always seemed to me.

And while I should by no means call *Antony and Cleopatra* Shakespeare's greatest play, I am inclined to think it is the most powerful in its immediate effect upon our sensibilities, and that more than any other one it shows his subtle mastery in the dramatic rendering of changing passion.

The title of the play suggests its theme,—the passion of Antony for Cleopatra. Everything is subservient to that. It is the struggle of a powerful nature in the toils of an attachment which he knows is costing him his friends, his empire, his hopes, and what is worse, his native force of will, and mastery of circumstance; an attachment which he knows is based on no truth or real affection, and which he never dares to trust with calm confidence for a single hour, but which, in spite of all, he knows he shall never escape from, and which, in his inmost heart, he doesn't wish to escape from. The hatred of all his countrymen at home, the clouding of his honor and the repulse of his ambition, the loss of the empire of half the world,—he will risk them all for one kiss from those lips that he knows may be forsworn to-morrow:

> Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
> Of the rang'd empire fall! Here is my space.

Where is there any record of an infatuation so entire, a fascination so superb? For Shakespeare takes care that we shall not look upon the downward career of this man with mere scorn. He knew that Antony didn't lose the world for nothing! He knew that the pleasures of sin, though but for a season, are very real pleasures while they last; and he had none of that cheap morality that is afraid to say so. And he makes us own it too. As we read, something of the magic of this great queen o' the world falls over us: we understand the resistless enchantment that is upon Antony. And when we understand that, we cannot stand aloof in cool indifference and condemn him. Yet all this dazzle of the lust of the eyes and the pride of life does not for a moment blind us to the moral quality of Antony's action and the inevitable doom which he is every moment nearing. Precisely there resides the tragedy. We see his manhood ebbing away, his iron resolution growing soft and pliant, and

> his captain's heart,
> Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst
> The buckles on his breast,

losing its soldier's temper and, warmed no longer by any chaste or temperate affection, bursting at last in shame and desperation. I think Shakespeare's moral steadiness is nowhere better shown than by the way in which, throughout the drama, he depicts with even-handed justice at once the charms and the results of sin.

It will be remembered that Julius Cæsar was assassinated in March of the year 44 B.C., and that it was two years after, 42, that the conspirators Brutus and Cassius were defeated in that great battle near Philippi which gave the government of the Roman world to the Triumvirs, Antony, Octavius, and Lepidus. The Eastern Empire fell to the share of Antony, and it was in the next year, 41, while he was on an expedition against the Parthians, that he had that first meeting with Cleopatra on the river Cydnus which Shakespeare, following Plutarch, has described so gorgeously

in the Second Act of the play. The result of this meeting was that she carried him away the captive of her charms to Alexandria, where he gave himself up to all luxury for more than a year. At home in Italy his wife, Fulvia, and her brother, Lucius, without his knowledge and, it was thought, with a desire to call him away from Egypt, made war upon Octavius; but before the war was fairly begun Fulvia died, and Antony was summoned to Rome to compose matters. It is at this point that the action of the play begins, about 40 B.C. Between this date and the death of Cleopatra with which it closes, about ten years actually elapsed; but in no one of his plays is Shakespeare more careless about making the dramatic sequence correspond closely to the historical order of events; and we must be content to say that between the marriage of Antony to Octavia and the battle of Actium some eight and a half years must be supposed to intervene. The events of the last two and a half Acts are all included in three days.

In the picture of Antony which he draws for us in *Julius Cæsar,* as in this play, Shakespeare has undoubtedly left out some of the cruelty and excesses with which Antony's earlier years had been stained, and has dwelt more upon his courage, skill, and address. Yet in neither play is Antony represented as having ever been a very noble man. As we see him in the *Julius Cæsar* he is a good deal of a demagogue, fluent of speech, of great versatility, and of much energy in emergencies. When he says in his funeral oration over Cæsar that he is "no orator as Brutus is" but only a plain, blunt man who speaks right on, we know of course that he is the consummate orator. Yet we should not think that his assertion is entirely a piece of conscious artifice. He was not exactly a plain, blunt man, but he was an impulsive, rather than a crafty man. Plutarch says, in fact, that he was a plain man without subtlety, and therefore over late found out the faults that others committed against him. He was evidently of warm passions, many generous impulses, and most engaging manners. In reality selfish and designing, he had none of that cold and wary manner which makes selfish and de-

signing men unpopular; on the contrary, he seemed hearty, open, and impetuous. He was, in fact, often liberal and magnanimous. He showed a ready appreciation of kindness in his friends and of greatness whether in friends or foes. His grief for Cæsar, if not deep, was genuine, and that was why it told so upon the populace. And you remember his burst of generous admiration over the body of the fallen Brutus:

> This was the noblest Roman of them all.
> . . . . . .
> His life was gentle, and the elements
> So mix'd in him, that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, "This was a man!"

To these qualities he added a reckless daring, a capacity for the brilliant and unexpected which always makes a man a popular leader, if not a safe one. His very vices seemed to display a certain opulence and prodigality of nature which cast a glitter in the eyes of the mob. The cold Octavius says with a twinge of envy that he is

> the abstract of all faults
> That men do follow.

Yet, reckless and profuse as he was, he had a resolute will and an iron temper; men wondered to see this man, who was a curled and fashionable courtier and demagogue at home, put on an almost stoical endurance, a genuine Roman hardihood in the field.

A great man, this Antony, certainly, if not a wise one; combining, as few men of his time could, strength and brilliancy, both in the forum and in the field. But though his character had many striking and some heroic qualities, it never had much moral elevation. He admired virtue and could say very noble things about it; but seemed to think, as men often do, that a generous recognition of virtue in others would atone for a lack of it in himself. I think you will find that moral ideas never took any real hold upon him or influenced greatly his conduct. All his struggles to get free from Cleopatra are prompted by a wounded pride and

by a constant tormenting knowledge that he is losing his native self-mastery and manhood, rather than by any sense of the moral degradation involved in that sweet slavery.

And now how natural it is that such a man as this should be taken captive by the fascinations of the great Egyptian Queen. He is already well advanced in life, 'when gray doth something mingle with his younger brown,' and far past those early days when the dreams of imagination throw a halo over passion that seems at once to enhance and to excuse it. No slight or passing grace can ensnare his fancy now. His life has been a rough and changeful one, and he stands at the climax of his ambition, one third of the world at his feet. Yet empire will never satisfy him. He is not of the stuff out of which the world's great conquerors have been made. His nature is too impulsive, passionate, and sensuous. In his soul love of pleasure is always struggling with love of power; and he feels that the toils, the conflict, the anxiety are a dear price to pay for the lonely and hateful eminence of rule. Then upon this man's life burst the splendor of Cleopatra. She is no mere girl: though younger than Antony she is "with Phœbus' amorous pinches black, and wrinkled deep in time." Something of the beauty of her earlier years may have faded; but it isn't chiefly her beauty of person that ensnares Antony. It isn't for a moment to be supposed that the attachment between them was one of mere animal passion. In this Queen are met all charms that can delight the rich and sensuous imagination of Antony. The splendor of her court, the Eastern magnificence of all her surroundings, the strange and varied opulence of her own nature, all delights, save moral ones, combine to weave that fascination which subdues not only the passions, but the intellect, the imagination, the will of this man. When the play opens, Antony is already won,—the whole drama is only the record of a series of struggles to be free, every one of which leaves him more entangled than before. We see from the start that his doom is sealed. Yet at first his nature is not entirely subdued. When the messenger arrives that informs him of the

death of Fulvia, though at first he will not hear the unwelcome tidings, yet his soldier's nature revives, and for a time gains the mastery. There is a burst of genuine and envying admiration for Fulvia, whose woman's daring shames his idle delays. "There's a great spirit gone!" cries he; and for a little he steels himself against the persuasions of Cleopatra and resolves to go back to Rome. He goes; but he will not think of breaking away from his bondage permanently, but gives a pledge at going that will bind him to return and make him her servant while he is away,—

> Quarrel no more, [my queen,] but be prepar'd to know
> The purposes I bear; which are, or cease,
> As you shall give the advice. By the fire
> That quickens Nilus' slime, I go from hence
> Thy soldier, servant; making peace or war
> As thou affects.

The Second Act and the first six scenes of the Third serve to show the variety and the urgency of those affairs of state which should have kept Antony away from Egypt, and the growing quarrel with Octavius which his infatuation for Cleopatra at last raised to that great conflict which ended in his downfall. The third Triumvir, Lepidus, that "slight, unmeritable man," is evidently a mere puppet in the hands of the other two that they will play with so long as they choose and then throw by. He is a weak, easy man, and there is something almost pathetic in the way he moves about in the shadow of the two great world-rulers that tower on either side of him, and affably hopes they will not quarrel. When they do seem inclined to quarrel, he is quite unable to do anything to conciliate them; but can only second with weak eagerness any suggestions that others may make: 'Soft, soft, Cæsar!' ''T is noble spoken, Antony,' and 'Aye, aye, worthily spoken, good Mæcenas.' A poor, fluttering little man, doomed to fall between the incensed points of these two mighty opposites.

Lepidus once gone, Antony and Octavius are left to play out the great game alone. As Enobarbus says,

> Then, world, thou hast a pair of chaps, no more;
> And throw between them all the food thou hast,
> They'll grind the one the other.

Octavius, afterwards the great Augustus Cæsar, but now a youth of twenty, is in the play the cool, quiet, self-restrained watchful man that, as I understand, the historians take him to have been. There are no enthusiasms or illusions about him. No heat of passion will blind him, and not even Cleopatra can ever snare him in her strong toil of grace. As I read his talk in this play, I always think of those two great marbles in the Vatican, the one the bust of the young Augustus, the other the statue of Augustus the Emperor, both of which alike have the firm compressed lip, the air of calm, self-contained dignity, unflinching resolution and mastery. His shrewd and steady diplomacy is set in admirable contrast with the impulsive and ardent nature of Antony.

That first conference between the two men after Antony reaches Rome seems to me one of the greatest of Shakespeare's many passages of diplomatic dialogue (II, i, 27 ff.). Both men are embarrassed at the meeting, but Antony broaches their differences at once, while Cæsar is inclined to be reticent and doesn't allow himself for an instant to be moved from his imperturbable calm. With unbroken dignity he urges one charge after another, and Antony somewhat impatiently refutes them all, as Octavius doubtless supposed he would. For he had really no intention of quarreling with Antony then; it wasn't safe while Pompey was so threatening. He only enumerates the charges that he may seem to put Antony under some obligation, and may the more emphasize his own seeming generosity in the proposition he knows Agrippa is to make in a moment. Accordingly, when he has nothing more to urge he adds,

> Yet, if I knew
> What hoop should hold us stanch, from edge to edge
> O' the world I would pursue it.

At which word Agrippa, who knows his cue, breaks in:

To hold you in perpetual amity,
To make you brothers, and to knit your hearts
With an unslipping knot, take Antony
Octavia to his wife; whose beauty claims
No worse a husband than the best of men;
Whose virtue and whose general graces speak
That which none else can utter. By this marriage,
All little jealousies, which now seem great,
And all great fears, which now import their dangers,
Would then be nothing. Truths would be tales,
Where now half-tales be truths; her love to both
Would each to other and all loves to both
Draw after her. Pardon what I have spoke;
For 'tis a studied, not a present thought,
By duty ruminated.

To all of which Cæsar says not a word: till Antony asks

Will Cæsar speak?
CÆS. Not till he hears how Antony is touch'd
With what is spoke already.
ANT. What power is in Agrippa,
If I would say, "Agrippa, be it so,"
To make this good?
CÆS. The power of Cæsar, and
His power unto Octavia.

The impulsive Antony is caught and adds,—

May I never
To this good purpose, that so fairly shows,
Dream of impediment! Let me have thy hand.
Further this act of grace; and from this hour
The heart of brothers govern in our loves
And sway our great designs!

I think he is sincere: he has no quarrel with Cæsar, and now that he is well out of Egypt he can keep for a little while his resolution to be himself again and accept the rule of the one half world that is his due. But two such mates in empire could not stall together in the whole world, as Cæsar says; and we see that it is Antony who must go down. In any case he must have proved eventually no match for such a cool and steady gamester as Octavius; but as it is, we know he will be seduced from duty by a thousand delicious memo-

ries to which he must yield at last. No one knows him so well as Enobarbus; and when Mæcenas says, "Now Antony must leave her utterly," it is Enobarbus who answers quietly, "Never; he will not."

Shakespeare has given us but a glimpse of the modest beauty and grace of Octavia. We see her when she takes her husband's hand and says farewell to her brother—"The April's in her eyes; it is love's spring, And these the showers to bring it on"; and we see her once more when she comes back again alone to that brother in the vain attempt to make peace between him and her husband:

> Ay me, most wretched,
> That have my heart parted betwixt two friends
> That do afflict each other.

And that is almost all. Shakespeare could hardly show us more of her without lessening that impression of still modesty which is her greatest charm. She has evidently a good deal of her brother's quiet firmness, and a certain moral dignity of character that win our respect: she was a Roman lady. But it was impossible that such a woman should ever make Antony forget the magic of that serpent of old Nile. "Octavia," says Enobarbus, "is of a holy, cold, and still conversation." "Who would not have his wife so?" replies Menas. To which Enobarbus returns, "Not he that himself is not so; which is Mark Antony."

The character of Pompey is not elaborated at all: he is introduced, I suppose, for the sake of fidelity to the history, and I cannot help thinking that the play would gain in unity and conciseness if his part, as well as some others, had been left out altogether. One scene, however, in which he figures, we could ill spare,—the banquet which Pompey gives the Triumvirs on board his galley. It does not advance the action of the play at all; but Shakespeare apparently couldn't resist the irony in this picture of the men who ruled the whole world in drunken carouse together. Poor Lepidus is the first to succumb, and maunders on in a feeble attempt to give some intellectual direction to his talk:

LEP. You've strange serpents there?
ANT. Ay, Lepidus.
LEP. Your serpent of Egypt is bred now of your mud by the operation of your sun. So is your crocodile.
ANT. They are so.
. . . . . .
LEP. I am not so well as I should be. . . .
. . . . . .
Nay, certainly, I have heard the Ptolemies, pyramises are very goodly things; without contradiction I have heard that.
. . . . . .
What manner o' thing is your crocodile?
ANT. It is shap'd, sir, like itself; and it is as broad as it hath breadth. It is just so high as it is, and moves with it own organs. It lives by that which nourisheth it; and the elements once out of it, it transmigrates.
LEP. What colour is it of?
ANT. Of it own colour too.
LEP. 'Tis a strange serpent.
ANT. 'Tis so. And the tears of it are wet.

'Keep off these quicksands, Lepidus, for you sink,' calls Antony, as the first third of the world falls under the table. Cold Octavius protests, but he, too, has to join the ring and join the song:

Come, thou monarch of the vine,
Plumpy Bacchus with pink eyne!
. . . . . .
With thy grapes our hairs be crown'd!
Cup us, till the world go round,
Cup us, till the world go round!

and he finds with odd vexation that his tongue begins to split as well as his head. The rough Pompey grows maudlin —"O, Antony, You have my father's house,—But what? we are friends." And stout Enobarbus himself is so disguised in liquor that he can only hiccup out

Ho! says 'a. There's my cap,

as the great men take themselves off. Only Antony keeps his head completely, though he drinks more than all the

rest. He had been in Egypt. What a picture that! As one writer says, it glows before us like some warm canvas of Rubens. And what a hint is given of the condition of a world of which these men were rulers!

Enobarbus was certainly far gone at Pompey's banquet; but that is the only time he loses his native wisdom and self-command. Enobarbus is, after Antony and Cleopatra, the most interesting character of the play,—perhaps the only honest man in it, and, I am much inclined to think, the wisest. Since there is no part which he can take in the action, he goes through the play as a keen quiet observer, with a blunt openness of spirit, and a caustic humor which nobody escapes. Almost all the wit and wisdom of the play you will find is uttered by Enobarbus; as the passion is by Antony and Cleopatra. He fully appreciates the magic of Cleopatra, while he is entirely proof against it himself. He knows Antony thoroughly, and sees from the start whither his course inevitably tends. Through it all he is Antony's best friend, and his judgment never is at fault. At first he tries to sting Antony into action by his satire, and does actually succeed in doing so:

ENO. What's your pleasure, sir?

ANT. I must with haste from hence.

ENO. Why, then, we kill all our women. We see how mortal an unkindness is to them; if they suffer our departure, death's the word.

ANT. I must be gone.

ENO. Under a compelling occasion, let women die. It were pity to cast them away for nothing; though, between them and a great cause, they should be esteemed nothing. Cleopatra, catching but the least noise of this, dies instantly; I have seen her die twenty times upon far poorer moment. . . .

ANT. She is cunning past man's thought.

ENO. Alack, sir, no; her passions are made of nothing but the finest part of pure love. We cannot call her winds and waters sighs and tears; they are greater storms and tempests than almanacs can report. This cannot be cunning in her; if it be, she makes a shower of rain as well as Jove.

ANT. Would I had never seen her!

ENO. O, sir, you had then left unseen a wonderful piece of

work; which not to have been blest withal would have discredited your travel.

ANT. Fulvia is dead.

ENO. Sir?

ANT. Fulvia is dead.

ENO. Fulvia!

ANT. Dead.

ENO. Why, sir, give the gods a thankful sacrifice. When it pleaseth their deities to take the wife of a man from him, it shows to man the tailors of the earth; comforting therein, that when old robes are worn out, there are members to make new. If there were no more women but Fulvia, then had you indeed a cut, and the case to be lamented. This grief is crown'd with consolation; your old smock brings forth a new petticoat: and indeed the tears live in an onion that should water this sorrow.

ANT. The business she hath broached in the state
Cannot endure my absence.

ENO. And the business you have broach'd here cannot be without you; especially that of Cleopatra's, which wholly depends on your abode.

ANT. No more light answers.

Nothing could have so effectually spurred the doubting determination of Antony as these words of Enobarbus which set his own weaker thoughts before him in grave irony. After Actium Enobarbus has no hope for Antony; but he will not leave him like the rest. Singularly cool in temper he seems to have no passionate attachment even to Antony, and this lack of enthusiasm only makes his grim Roman fidelity show the more noble. He'll follow yet the wounded chance of his master, though his reason sits i' the wind against it. "Mine honesty," says he,

> and I begin to square.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> yet he that can endure
> To follow with allegiance a fallen lord
> Doth conquer him that did his master conquer,
> And earns a place i' the story.

At last, for one fatal hour, his reason gets the better of his fidelity, and he deserts his fallen and desperate lord. But when Antony with that impulsive magnanimity so char-

acteristic of him, sends his forgiveness and bounty after his old servant, the big heart of Enobarbus breaks for shame, and he dies with words of bitter self-accusing on his lips:

> Be witness to me, O thou blessed moon,
> When men revolted shall upon record
> Bear hateful memory, poor Enobarbus did
> Before thy face repent!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> O sovereign mistress of true melancholy,
> The poisonous damp of night disponge upon me,
> That life, a very rebel to my will,
> May hang no longer on me.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> O Antony,
> Nobler than my revolt is infamous,
> Forgive me in thine own particular;
> But let the world rank me in register
> A master-leaver and a fugitive.
> O Antony! O Antony!

And you will see how this spectacle of the dying fidelity of Enobarbus heightens our pity for Antony, by reminding us of that native generosity of soul that could win such faith.

But all the characters of the play pale beside the splendor of the great Queen. I don't see how any man can read the drama without coming under the fascination of Cleopatra; but it is hard to say just what is the nature of the charm. Shakespeare has drawn no character, perhaps, that is more intricate, subtle, and dazzling,—and I may add he has drawn none with greater vigor and heartiness of interest. It is certainly not an unreasonable conjecture that "the dark lady" of the later sonnets was in his thoughts and inspired his pen as he drew this wonderfully vivid Cleopatra, that will now always be the Cleopatra of history; and it is another interesting, though perhaps less probable, conjecture that the original both of the dark lady of the sonnets and of the Cleopatra of the play was that strange and wildly beautiful woman whose life was darkly linked with that of several of the best and greatest of Englishmen, Penelope Devereux, the sister of young Essex, and the Stella of Philip Sidney.

Of course the attraction of Cleopatra does not reside principally in her personal beauty, for that can only be suggested in poetry and Antony doesn't say much about it. And though the lower and more sensual side of her nature is everywhere so clearly indicated that we are in no danger of giving her our respect, yet it is indicated only in casual and indirect ways,—mostly by the talk of her attendants, Iras and Charmian. We are not allowed to think the great Queen gross. Her principal external charm would seem to have been an imperial grace of manner which could defy all convention and embellish the meanest actions; "I saw her once," says Enobarbus,

> Hop forty paces through the public street;
> And having lost her breath, she spoke, and panted,
> That she did make defect perfection.

What impresses us most in Cleopatra is a kind of Eastern magnificence and voluptuousness, an opulence of nature. Her imagination is gorgeous in its coloring, her conceptions have an oriental vastness and splendor, her passions a fire and intensity such as we can hardly think of in any other woman of history. She is no longer young; her beauty is in its ripe autumnal maturity; but the fulness and force of life in her character is wonderful. There is a bewitching changefulness in her moods:—haughty and defiant, then insinuating and tender; magnificently willful, then softly yielding; splendidly seductive, then timidly retiring; wildly mirthful, then classically elegant; superbly proud, then voluptuously languishing,—she is all these by turns, and all these varied moods and passions seem to spring spontaneously out of the exhaustless riches of her nature. As Enobarbus says,

> Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety.

This continued changefulness of mood is partly the result of her naturally impetuous and unregulated temper,

which knows no higher motive than the constant chase of pleasure; but it is heightened by all the arts of the most perfect coquetry, which she has practiced so long that they have become a kind of second nature. You can never tell exactly how far she is sincere; because, indeed, she doesn't know herself. And she is well aware that in this variety and intensity of excitement resides her chief attraction for others, as well as the only happiness for herself. For you will not find in Cleopatra any repose of nature, nor any of that dignity which comes from settled calm of soul. Of course that would be impossible without self-command, and some moral qualities to which she is a stranger. And that is one reason why her fascination, though so resistless, is so unsteady. Antony is constantly breaking away from it, and she always brings him back again by some fresh surprise of charm more potent than the last.

But although Cleopatra has all the weaknesses of a passionate nature without any moral steadiness, yet even her very wilfulness and impatience have a queenly volume and force that command our admiration if not our respect; so that what in a more meager and acrid nature would be mere scolding or vacillation is lifted into poetry by this "wrangling queen whom everything becomes." You remember how she received the messenger that brought the news of Antony's marriage to Octavia (II, v, 23 ff.). The play of sudden and ungovernable passion, the strange mixture of tenderness and anger, make an admirable picture of the varied and ill-regulated temper of this great Queen. Very characteristic is it, too, I think, that the Queen when she has had a little time to recover from the first shock of her anger and grief, should feel sure of her ability to recover Antony (III, iii, 7-45).

Doubtless we should not apply the sacred name of love to a passion into which selfish and sensual elements so largely enter; yet it was genuine and intense and engaged the whole nature of Cleopatra. Antony does seem to her the greatest of men. His rich sensuous tastes are akin to hers; and his daring, his profusion, his very carelessness of the

proud prizes of empire seem to her the proofs of a great spirit. Beside such a man the kings who kissed her hand in earlier days seem small in her memory: great Pompey was a weakling, and broad-fronted Julius himself cold and no bounteous lover. You remember her magnificent outburst to Dolabella after Antony's death; it will indicate how vast Antony had loomed before her imagination:

> CLEO. I dream'd there was an Emperor Antony.
> O, such another sleep, that I might see
> But such another man!
> DOL. If it might please ye,—
> CLEO. His face was as the heavens; and therein stuck
> A sun and moon, which kept their course and lighted
> The little O, the earth.
> DOL. Most sovereign creature,—
> CLEO. His legs bestrid the ocean; his rear'd arm
> Crested the world; his voice was propertied
> As all the tuned spheres, and that to friends;
> But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,
> He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty,
> There was no winter in 't; an autumn 't was
> That grew the more by reaping. His delights
> Were dolphin-like, they show'd his back above
> The element they liv'd in. In his livery
> Walk'd crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
> As plates dropp'd from his pocket.
> DOL. Cleopatra!
> CLEO. Think you there was or might be such a man
> As this I dream'd of?
> DOL. Gentle madam, no.
> CLEO. You lie, up to the hearing of the gods!

To have ensnared such a man as that in her strong toil of grace, to know the ruler of the one half world is at her feet, that satisfies at once her love of power and her love of pleasure and sets her pulses a-throbbing with the proud joy of passionate conquest. All her thoughts of him while he is away are full of that sweet sense of mastery,—

> O Charmian,
> Where think'st thou he is now? . . . He's speaking now,
> Or murmuring, "Where's my serpent of old Nile?"
> For so he calls me.

Yet with all this pride of conquest there is blended some more generous feeling. Her real admiration for Antony has kindled all the enthusiasm of her nature, and has centered upon him all her hopes and all her desires. He has come to seem a part of herself. There isn't, to be sure, any entire unselfish devotion in her passion, but a kind of desperate self-abandonment. She has thrown all the witchery of her nature into the conquest of this man and she has magnificently won: henceforth his love is the prize without which life would lose its value. She couldn't die for him, but she could die with him.

After the shame of Antony's defeat at Actium, her grief springs in great part from sincere sympathy for him, rather than from mere personal apprehension for herself. In that first interview with Antony after his flight, when she stands before him in tears and wonder to see this lord o' the world sunk in humiliation, it has always seemed to me that there is in her demeanor—for she hardly speaks at all—a subtle mixture of woman's tenderness and woman's artifice. It stirs her pitying love to think that this man has lost an empire for her; but even in that moment she is half-conscious of what magic there is in her tears:

EROS. Sir, the Queen.
ANT. O, whither hast thou led me, Egypt? See,
How I convey my shame out of thine eyes
By looking back what I have left behind
'Stroy'd in dishonour.
CLEO. O my lord, my lord,
Forgive my fearful sails! I little thought
You would have followed.
ANT. Egypt, thou knew'st too well
My heart was to thy rudder tied by the strings,
And thou shouldst tow me after. O'er my spirit
Thy full supremacy thou knew'st, and that
Thy beck might from the bidding of the gods
Command me.
CLEO. O, my pardon!
ANT. Now I must
To the young man send humble treaties, dodge
And palter in the shifts of lowness; who
With half the bulk o' the world play'd as I pleas'd,

Making and marring fortunes. You did know
How much you were my conqueror; and that
My sword, made weak by my affection, would
Obey it on all cause.
CLEO. Pardon, pardon!
ANT. Fall not a tear, I say; one of them rates
All that is won and lost. Give me a kiss.
Even this repays me.

After this Antony is never proof against her fascination while in her presence, even when he most suspects she may betray him. His last chance for heroic self-mastery vanishes when he confesses hopelessly to himself and to her that full supremacy that from the bidding of the gods themselves might now command him. He feels that he has sacrificed too much for his passion to abandon it now. His native force of will is weakening, and his shrewd judgment sunk so low that he can send a personal challenge to Octavius. "I see men's judgements," says Enobarbus, "are a parcel of their fortunes;"

. . . That he should dream,
Knowing all measures, the full Cæsar will
Answer his emptiness! Cæsar, thou hast subdu'd
His judgement too.

No, not Cæsar; but Cleopatra has. The last and lowest stage of his fall is reached when he has ocular proof of Cleopatra's willingness to make terms with Cæsar (III, xiii, 81 ff.) and yet, in spite of it, cannot, will not, break the chain that binds him to her.

From that hour he does not really trust her an instant. He knows there is no truth or real affection in her attachment for him; but he will not think of it. It is too late now to retrieve his fate. The end is near. He sees his doom just in front of him; but he will make the drama last a little longer, if he may, intoxicate for yet a little space his senses and his soul, and die in desperation under that enchantment. As he calls about him his followers that night for one last banquet, his words are all a-tremble with suppressed emotion and warm with that impulsive kindness of feeling which always attached men to him. It would be hard to find a more

thrilling scene than that (IV, ii); it is the lightning before death.

Next day he fights like a madman, and at its close he doesn't dare to let this temper of desperation cool and give him a moment's time for thought. As he comes in at nightfall from the world's great snare once more uncaught to meet the Queen, there is no hope or trust in his greeting, but the passion of desperate abandonment which he means shall never cool again. He will keep this sweet poison burning in his veins till the end comes:

> O thou day o' the world,
> Chain mine arm'd neck; leap thou, attire and all,
> Through proof of harness to my heart, and there
> Ride on the pants triumphing!
> . . . . . .
> My nightingale,
> We have beat them to their beds. What, girl! though grey
> Do something mingle with our younger brown, yet ha' we
> A brain that nourishes our nerves, and can
> Get goal for goal of youth.

But when on the morrow the Egyptian sails turn in flight and he sees that all is over, it is no surprise to him, and he leaps too quickly to the angry conclusion that Cleopatra has betrayed him. He cannot longer force himself to believe the sweet falsehood that she is true. He could never live steadily in that illusion; it seems he must die without it now. The fury of desperation has spent itself. Left alone for a little with the one follower that still is faithful to him he looks backward over his years, sees all the vast hopes of his life, the pageantry of his power dissolved and vanishing into vacancy. There are few passages in Shakespeare of more noble imagery or more moving pathos than this:

> ANT. Eros, thou yet behold'st me?
> EROS. Ay, noble lord.
> ANT. Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish;
> A vapour sometime like a bear or lion,
> A tower'd citadel, a pendent rock,
> A forked mountain, or blue promontory

With trees upon 't, that nod unto the world,
And mock our eyes with air. Thou hast seen these signs;
They are black vesper's pageants.
EROS. Ay, my lord.
ANT. That which is now a horse, even with a thought
The rack dislimns and makes it indistinct,
As water is in water.
EROS. It does, my lord.
ANT. My good knave Eros, now thy captain is
Even such a body. Here I am Antony;
Yet cannot hold this visible shape, my knave.
I made these wars for Egypt; and the Queen,—
Whose heart I thought I had, for she had mine,
Which whilst it was mine had annex'd unto 't
A million more, now lost,—she, Eros, has
Pack'd cards with Cæsar, and false-play'd my glory
Unto an enemy's triumph.
Nay, weep not, gentle Eros; there is left us
Ourselves to end ourselves.

But even the very last moments of this man Antony must be beguiled by the arts of the woman for whom he had wasted his life. As he speaks, the messenger enters with the false tidings that Cleopatra is dead—dead with his name upon her lips:

ANT. Dead, then?
MAR. Dead.
ANT. Unarm, Eros; the long day's task is done,
And we must sleep. . . . Off, pluck off!
The seven-fold shield of Ajax cannot keep
The battery from my heart. . . .
. . . . . .
No more a soldier. Bruised pieces, go;
You have been nobly borne.—From me a while.—
[*Exit Eros.*
I will o'ertake thee, Cleopatra, and
Weep for my pardon. So it must be, for now
All length is torture; since the torch is out,
Lie down, and stray no farther. . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . Seal then, and all is done.
Eros!—I come, my queen!—Eros!—Stay for me!
Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand,

And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze.
Dido and her Æneas shall want troops,
And all the haunt be ours. Come, Eros, Eros!

No more heroic resolves, no more heroic regrets; now the end has come for this ruler of the world, he is already dead to all best worth the living, and he can raise his hopes only high enough to wish for a continuation in another world of that sweet slavery for which he had been content to barter all that is noblest in this one. That is the crowning pathos of his last gasp,—

I am dying, Egypt, dying; only
I here importune death a while, until
Of many thousand kisses the poor last
I lay upon thy lips.

He has gained more than the whole world, but he has lost his own soul.

About the closing hours of Cleopatra herself Shakespeare has thrown a pathetic majesty which makes us almost forget her weakness. Nothing in her life became her like the leaving it. The death of Antony breaks up the fountains of her woman's heart, and all the nobler elements of her passion for him cry out in her pathetic lament, as she recovers from her swoon and finds him dead in her arms:

IRAS. Royal Egypt,
Empress!
CHAR. Peace, peace, Iras!
CLEO. No more but e'en a woman, and commanded
By such poor passion as the maid that milks
And does the meanest chares. It were for me
To throw my sceptre at the injurious gods;
To tell them that this world did equal theirs
Till they had stolen our jewel. All's but naught;
. . . . . .
. . . . . How do you, women?
What, what! good cheer! Why, how now, Charmian!
My noble girls! Ah, women, women, look,
Our lamp is spent, it's out! Good sirs, take heart.
We'll bury him; and then, what's brave, what's noble,
Let's do it after the high Roman fashion,

And make Death proud to take us. Come, away;
This case of that huge spirit now is cold.
Ah, women, women! come; we have no friend
But resolution and the briefest end.

There is nothing left but death for her now. Had she not known that her arts would be wasted on Octavius, she might not yet have despaired of life and further conquests; but knowing the uselessness of further attempts she does not think of them now. Her passionate grief and longing for Antony really seem to her the only motive of her resolve. But to die with calm resolution is impossible for Cleopatra, who has never done anything in her life except on passionate impulse. She strives to intensify her determination by going over again in thought all that majesty of Antony that had won her admiration; she forces herself to paint before her excited imagination in all its bitter details the shameful alternative of captivity:

I
Will not wait pinion'd at your master's court;
Nor once be chastis'd with the sober eye
Of dull Octavia. Shall they hoist me up
And show me to the shouting varletry
Of censuring Rome? Rather a ditch in Egypt
Be gentle grave unto me!

Haughty and sensuous to the end, she will think the last dismissal easier if she may take it in company with her women and in circumstances of state that shall stimulate her imagination and heighten her emotions. She has lived proudly; she will die proudly:

Now, Charmian!
Show me, my women, like a queen. Go fetch
My best attires; I am again for Cydnus
To meet Mark Antony.

The end is wonderful. At the supreme moment, her resolution falters and she rouses herself to that passionate longing for Antony which shall make death easy; she will claim credit for all that was best in her affection for him, she will dare to call him husband now:

CLEO. Give me my robe, put on my crown; I have
Immortal longings in me. Now no more
The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip.
Yare, yare, good Iras; quick. Methinks I hear
Antony call; I see him rouse himself
To praise my noble act; . . . Husband, I come!
Now to that name my courage prove my title!
I am fire and air; my other elements
I give to baser life. So; have you done?
Come then, and take the last warmth of my lips.
Farewell, kind Charmian; Iras, long farewell.
[*Kisses them. Iras falls and dies.*]
Have I the aspic in my lips? Dost fall?
If thou and nature can so gently part,
The stroke of death is as a lover's pinch,
Which hurts, and is desir'd. Dost thou lie still?
If thus thou vanishest, thou tell'st the world
It is not worth leave-taking.
. . . . . .
This proves me base.
If she first meet the curled Antony,
He'll make demand of her, and spend that kiss
Which is my heaven to have. Come, thou mortal wretch,
[*To an asp, which she applies to her breast.*]
With thy sharp teeth this knot intrinsicate
Of life at once untie. Poor venomous fool,
Be angry, and dispatch.

Yet even in that moment there is a last flash of the old defiant joy of conquest as she thinks how she has defrauded the great Cæsar of his triumph,—

O, couldst thou speak,
That I might hear thee call great Cæsar ass
Unpolicied!

It is the last word of the serpent of old Nile,—the queen is dead; but the woman breathes again with that last word which tells what pangs and joys of motherhood had sanctified some hours even of this woman's life, and left memories that lingered longest as the light was fading out of her eyes:

CLEO. Peace, peace!
Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
That sucks the nurse asleep?
CHAR. O, break! O, break!

CLEO. As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle,—
O, Antony!—Nay, I will take thee too:
[*Applying another asp to her arm.*]
What should I stay—

And as this "gorgeous tragedy in sceptered pall" sweeps by us to its solemn close, who can turn away without feeling that this human life of ours is too high a thing to be wasted upon pleasures however splendid, and that swift upon the heels of our proudest transgressions walk the stern-eyed retributions of offended law:

The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armor against fate;
Death lays his icy hands on kings:
. . . . . .
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust.

THE WINTER'S TALE

DURING the years of his greatest literary activity Shakespeare certainly spent most of his time in London. His home, indeed, was still in Stratford; his father and mother so long as they lived were there; his wife and children were there; and we may well believe his thoughts and his heart were often there too. Tradition records that he always visited Stratford at least once a year; and it is certain that all through his dramatic career he planned to go back there some day, and spend his declining years in those scenes which must have been dear to him from boyhood, growing old among a family who might inherit his honors and his estates. He had purchased the most goodly house in this village and more than a hundred acres of broad sweeping meadow land in the country near by, and we can safely believe that after the first few years of the new century his visits to Stratford must have been longer and more frequent. At what time he quitted London for good and came home to live at New Place cannot now be determined; it may have been as early as 1609, it may possibly have been as late as the first months of 1613. It seems to me most probable, on the whole, that it was early in 1610. His fortunes had prospered; he was a wealthy man, most likely the wealthiest man of his native village. But it was with chastened feelings and something of that tempered joy that comes from hard experience and disappointment that Shakespeare, as one thinks, gave up the tumult and struggle of his career abroad and came home to accept and enjoy the lot that heaven had given him. One hope of his life was frustrate,—he had no son. His only boy, Hamnet, had died years before. The only grandchild that he lived to have in his arms was a girl, the child of his eldest daughter, Susanna; and now that his father was gone and two of his

brothers had died childless, he seems to have been left alone to bear a name that would die with him. But his wife was there, loyal to his love still, however much he may perchance have tried hers in some of the darker passages of his London life, and as dear to him now, I believe, in that afternoon time of reconciliation and of trust as when he wooed her in the early days of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.[1] His daughters were there, one living hard by her father's house, happily wedded and with a prattling infant just old enough to form some words of that great speech ennobled by the name of Shakespeare, the other still living at New Place with her mother, and just of that age her mother was when Will Shakespeare first came over the fields to Shottery. And all about was the same fair country, gently sloping hill and forest and meadows and hedges and slow-flowing river, that landscape which had been always in his thought and of which we have so often caught glimpses in his poetry.

It was in such surroundings, in the quiet of these familiar scenes, that Shakespeare, as we believe, wrote three plays, the last written entirely by him,—*Cymbeline, The Tempest, The Winter's Tale*. These last plays entirely his own are in some respects unlike anything else of Shakespeare's; and every one must feel that they grew out of the grave calm, the domestic peace of his later years. The great questions of life are solved or put aside as insoluble; the great passions are calmed. The plays are not tragedies, but end in some kind of reconciliation and peace. Yet they are not comedies; the humor is grave and wise, sometimes for a little delightfully roguish, but no longer dominant or obtrusive, pervading the whole rather than making itself felt at any one point. As the plays are each based on some romantic tale, they may perhaps best be called Romances, rather than either Tragedies or Comedies. Yet their temper is hardly romantic. There is a mellow, autumnal feeling about

[1] This refers to a charming theory it was Professor Winchester's humor to suggest in his lecture on *Midsummer Night's Dream*,—that the play was in substance an actual dream of Shakespeare's one night after he had been to see Anne Hathaway. The date determined for the play is, of course, much later. [L. B. G.]

them. All three turn mostly upon the strength and truth of the domestic affections; and they may be called, more truly than any other dramas of Shakespeare, plays of home. The brightness of early imagination is toned into the softer hues of reality; the ardor of youthful passion has cooled. If there is love-making, it is described not now with the rapture of a lover, but with the wise and tender solicitude of a father. It isn't Romeo and Juliet now, but Florizel and Perdita. And besides this general tone of grave serenity and conciliation, one may notice three more specific peculiarities of these latest plays. In each one there is a central character sorely tried by some misunderstanding or wrong, suffering patiently and winning back at last by forgiveness and unwavering moral strength the trust that was always deserved. In two of the plays this character is a wife shamefully mistrusted by her husband, yet true to him and true to herself through it all,—Imogen and Hermione. Secondly, the plays are almost the first ones in which we find childhood and early youth depicted with deep and yearning paternal sympathy. Miranda, Perdita, and those two boys in *Cymbeline,*—Shakespeare's thoughts seem to dwell upon these charming young people with almost pathetic concern. And then, thirdly, there are in all three of these plays some exquisite country scenes, glimpses of hill, forest, or garden which seem to show with what quiet delight the eye of the great master was feeding upon the rural beauty around his home.

It would be hard to say which of the three plays is best; each has its especial charm. *Cymbeline* has that matchless character, Imogen, the perfect flower of womanhood in Shakespeare. In *The Tempest* the wise and noble figure of Prospero seems to me to represent more nearly than any other the character of Shakespeare himself in the maturity of his later years; I am persuaded that the more Prospero is studied, the stronger will be the conviction that, in many respects, he is the great magician, Shakespeare himself. But I have chosen to close this brief series of lectures with some remarks upon *The Winter's Tale,* partly because it is prob-

ably the last entire play that Shakespeare ever wrote, but principally because it seems to me to exemplify better than either of the others all the peculiarities I have mentioned, and because it is the one of the three that I feel most certain must have been inspired by Shakespeare's renewed family life at Stratford. I must believe that Shakespeare's portrait of Hermione is a tribute to that wifely affection which I fear he may have put sadly to the proof but which was true to him through all. In Perdita I fancy we may see some traits of Judith Shakespeare as she seemed to her father's partial eyes; and when Shakespeare wrote such lines as these, can you doubt of whom he was thinking?

> Looking on the lines
> Of my boy's face, methoughts I did recoil
> Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd
> In my green velvet coat, my dagger muzzl'd,
> Lest it should bite its master, and so prove,
> As ornaments oft do, too dangerous.
> How like, methought, I then was to this kernel,
> This squash, this gentleman. Mine honest friend,
> Will you take eggs for money?
> MAM. No, my lord, I'll fight.
> LEON. You will! Why, happy man be 's dole! My brother.
> Are you so fond of your young prince as we
> Do seem to be of ours?

Most certainly he had in his memory then that boy of his, missed more than ever now,—the boy, Hamnet, who died when a lad of eleven, some fifteen years before, and left a long sorrow in his father's heart. That sorrow speaks repeatedly in this play, if I read between its lines aright; as in that touching outburst of Leontes in the last Act when Pauline mentions this young Mamillius, who too had then been dead, you remember, some fifteen years,

> Prithee, no more; cease. Thou knowst
> He dies to me again when talk'd of.

And as to the homely country folk, the shepherd and the clown, and Mopsa, and Dorcas, surely they are all of good

Stratford peasantry, and akin to Shakespeare's early Stratford friends, Bottom, and Quince, and Snug, and the rest. Perdita's pretty garden was at Shottery I know, for it is blooming still and I have picked her flowers there myself.

The plot of *The Winter's Tale,* like that of *As You Like It,* Shakespeare borrowed from one of those long meandering romances that were so popular in his youth. Like Lodge and other of his fellow dramatists, Greene wrote a number of long prose romances, through which his charming lyrics are scattered. One of these romances called *Pandosto* was the source of the plot of *The Winter's Tale.* The first three Acts of the drama, up to the supposed death of the Queen follow the romance very closely,—so closely, indeed, that it would seem that Shakespeare must have read it very recently, or have written with it before him,—but the last half of the drama diverges more widely from the romance. In Greene's story the Queen actually dies, and at the close, the King, her husband, in despair poisons himself; the restoration of Hermione, the device of the statue, and the delightful ending of the play are all original with Shakespeare. So also are the three persons, Paulina, Autolycus, and the Shepherd's son. But of course here, as almost everywhere, Shakespeare owes to his authorities nothing more than the outline of a plot; the characters of the play are of his own creating, and its general tone is entirely different from that of the romance.

In no one of his plays does Shakespeare show a more valiant disregard of all restrictions of fact and rule. In defiance of all laws of dramatic unity he goes so far as to divide his play sharply into two parts, and put an interval of sixteen years between them. Perdita is an infant of days at the close of the Third Act, and a lass of sixteen years at the beginning of the Fourth. He has, moreover, crowded the play with anachronisms and all sorts of impossible geography and history. On the mainland of Sicily we have a King who receives a wife from the Emperor of Russia, a message from the Delphic oracle, and a statue from Giulio Romano; while in the island of Bohemia, besides most

charming royal people in disguise, we have shepherds who reckon their tods of wool in pounds, shillings, and pence, and Puritans who sing psalms to hornpipes,—a practice which I grieve to say their descendants outside of Bohemia have not yet quite given up.

Perhaps it was in recognition of such romantic liberties that Shakespeare called his play a Winter's Tale, as he had once before called a play of pure fancy a Dream; and you remember that Father Time is made to come in as a chorus with some words of explanation and apology for the great gap he has made between the Third and Fourth Acts. But for these violations of formal accuracy, which would have vexed the righteous soul of a Ben Jonson, Shakespeare never cared much, and as he grew older he cared less and less.

The story of the first half of the play is very briefly told. Leontes, King of Sicily, suspects his wife, Hermione, of infidelity with Polixenes, King of Bohemia, who, after a long visit at his court, is now just going home. The base suspicion once fixed in the mind of Leontes, nothing can disabuse him of it. One of his trusted advisers discloses his delusion to Polixenes and hastens the Bohemian King out of Sicily. This only increases the insane jealousy of Leontes and convinces him that he is the object of a conspiracy at home. He mercilessly orders that the infant daughter of Hermione shall be exposed to death in some remote and desert place, and hurries the Queen herself, yet in her mother's weakness, to a form of trial before himself, where he is determined to inflict the harshest penalty, even in spite of a message from the Delphic oracle which pronounces her innocent. But before the dread sentence can fall, word comes that the prince, only son of Leontes, is dead for very grief and shame at the disgrace that is come upon his mother. Hermione herself at this tidings swoons away, and is shortly after reported dead. But this double grief opens the eyes of Leontes to his own cruel folly, and in bitter repentance he vows, thereafter, once a day to visit the chapel where they lie. "And tears shed there shall be my recreation."

The jealousy of Leontes, at first reading, seems sudden

and unprovoked. This is due in part to the necessary conciseness of dramatic structure which makes it impossible to do more than suggest the causes of a passion like this. Yet a careful reading of the play will show, I think, that Shakespeare has made no mistake, and that the infatuation of Leontes is neither inexplicable nor unnatural. For the jealousy of Leontes is not, like the jealousy of Othello, an alien conviction slowly forced upon an open and confiding nature by what seems irresistible evidence. Leontes is naturally of a suspicious, mistrustful temper. There are, to be sure, some noble things about him: he is upright and honest in purpose, and, if he is stern to others, he would be quite as harsh to himself as to any one else; his father's love for Mamillius and his fond memories of all his wedded life with his Queen show how deep are his affections. But the poisonous juice of jealousy and moodiness taints his blood by nature. With a wife more vivacious in manner and of less calm self-command his life would long before have been embittered; but Hermione knew his temper very well, and her conduct has been always so wise and loving that not even one so exacting as Leontes could find anything to shake his confidence. As it is, his love for Hermione is so precious to him that there is a kind of selfish exclusiveness in it, and a morbid fear that any one else shall share her smiles. He is jealous even of her friendship, and doesn't like to have her express any high regard for any one but himself. I suppose this is the reason that, while he is trying to persuade Polixenes to stay longer, she stands by quietly without a word, until Leontes asks her to join her persuasions to his. And you will note that he does this with a kind of uneasy feeling that he is sharing with his friend favors that belong peculiarly to himself, and a fear that Hermione will be too persuasive. As he listens to the playful yet dignified urgency of her invitation, and sees that Polixenes will yield and stay, he is vexed to find that she seems as attractive to any one else as she does to him; and I think it is a firm truth of nature that this should turn his thought into bitter sweet reminiscence of all her winsomeness in the past. At last he asks:

Is he won yet?

HER. He'll stay, my lord.

LEON. At my request he would not.
Hermione, my dearest, thou never spok'st
To better purpose.

HER. Never?

LEON. Never, but once.

HER. What! have I twice said well? When was 't before?
I prithee tell me; cram 's with praise. . . .

. . . . . .

My last good deed was to entreat his stay;
What was my first? It has an elder sister,
Or I mistake you. O, would her name were Grace!
But once before I spoke to the purpose; when?
Nay, let me have 't; I long.

LEON. Why, that was when
Three crabbed months had sour'd themselves to death,
Ere I could make thee open thy white hand
And clap thyself my love; then didst thou utter
"I am yours for ever."

You see in these last words he is dwelling on that sweet olden time with a haunting mistrust of Hermione, and a vague feeling that her delay implied some lack of entire devotion to him even then. The germ of jealousy once planted in the mind of Leontes all the subsequent growth of that dire disease is natural enough. It is not a noble, pitying jealousy, like that of Othello, which thinks most not of itself but of the truth and purity debased, and moans over that, "O the pity of it, Iago, the pity of it." The jealousy of Leontes is selfish, and inexorable towards its victim. As he has no facts on which to base his disbelief, it is impossible to convince him of his error; a thousand vile suspicions crowd his imagination and furnish all the evidence that his jealous temper craves. All the discretion of the Queen seems to him now only evidence of her craft. The sudden departure of Polixenes after his promise to stay he interprets as a confirmation of his doubts, and his infatuation grows into a flaming passion at once. Any word in defense of Hermione or question of his justice drives him into a rage; and if he sends to inquire of the oracle it is only to satisfy the minds of others; for himself he needs no further proof:

I have dispatch'd in post
To sacred Delphos, to Apollo's temple,
. . . . . .
Though I am satisfi'd and need no more
Than what I know, yet shall the oracle
Give rest to the minds of others, such as he
Whose ignorant credulity will not
Come up to the truth.

That is, he means to use the authority of the oracle if it approve his intentions; if it do not, he will defy it.

Yet jealousy so violent is naturally somewhat transient, —a passionate mood, rather than a settled, cold distrust. Leontes is too obstinate and wilful to give up his delusion soon, but we feel that he will sometime come to regret it. Even when the trial comes on, his first frenzy of conviction has passed; and though he rejects the message of the oracle as he had before resolved he would, yet when the tidings of his son's death are brought in and Hermione swoons before him, the cruel illusion dissolves; with the mother of his boy dying there before him he sees his baseness,—

I have too much believ'd mine own suspicion.
Beseech you, tenderly apply to her
Some remedies for life. Apollo pardon
My great profaneness 'gainst thine oracle!

His repentance is as deep and as passionate as his sin has been. He has no mercy for himself,—"I have deserv'd All tongues to talk their bitt'rest." It is, indeed, a solemn truth, as he felt, that a great injustice such as he had wrought can never be atoned for; but in the sixteen weary years of solitary life that followed we feel that he conquers at last his native jealousy of temper, and gains, by that long suffering, a charity, a calmness, and a self-command which make him better worthy such a wife as Hermione.

Among the whole company of wedded wives in Shakespeare's world, some perhaps may be more beautiful, or more engaging than Hermione, but certainly there is no one more noble. She is every inch a queen, and yet a woman first of all. I think always of Wordworth's lines,

> A perfect woman, nobly planned,
> To warn, to comfort, and command.

There is always a certain quietness and austerity in her demeanor. She lacks something of that tenderness and animation which combine with strength to make Imogen the crown of womanhood in Shakespeare. Hermione's affections are deep, but they are still and not much prone to outward expression; one who did not know her well might think her cold. Even in her most familiar converse there is a certain gracious dignity which betokens perfect calmness and self-command. I think this queenly courtesy is well shown in the very first words we hear her speak, as, at the suggestion of her husband, she invites Polixenes to stay with them longer. The sweetness and gentleness of her character are seen best, perhaps, in her mother's love for her children; and I think it is a most admirable stroke of Shakespeare's art to show us that pretty bedtime scene with the boy, Mamillius (II, i). It is upon this touching scene that Leontes breaks in with his savage charge,—"Give me the boy: I'm glad you did not nurse him. . . Bear the boy hence; he shall not come about her." The terrible accusation astounds her; but she does not sink under it. Her white lips tremble, but she doesn't lose her calm self-command as she answers,—

> Should a villain say so,
> The most replenish'd villain in the world,
> He were as much more villain: you, my lord,
> Do but mistake.

As her husband goes on to load her with reproaches, his words burn to her heart's core, but she doesn't weep or swoon. To the profoundest depths of her great woman's heart she feels what an insult this is; but even at that moment her keenest pain seems to be not for herself, but for her husband. To think that he, Leontes, standing there, the father of her Mamillius and of her child unborn, can so far mistake her! Yet she does not loathe him, but pities rather, and you will go far to find nobler words than those with which she interrupts his wild accusation:

No, by my life,
Privy to none of this. How will this grieve you,
When you shall come to clearer knowledge, that
You thus have publish'd me! Gentle, my lord,
You scarce can right me throughly then to say
You did mistake.

It is only when under some such great trial that a character like that of Hermione shows all its wonderful strength and sweetness. The suspicion of her husband is a strange, unutterable wrong; she feels it as a nature less deep and calm never could feel it. All her womanhood protests against it. Yet she bears it without either weak submission or loud complaint. She has not been much used to seek her own happiness and she can do without it now. She has the still approvings of a good conscience; and she has the fortitude that comes from long habit of self-sacrifice and self-command. She can suffer and be strong. "Good my lords," says she to the nobles as she is to be led away to prison:

Good my lords,
I am not prone to weeping, as our sex
Commonly are, the want of which vain dew
Perchance shall dry your pities; but I have
That honourable grief lodg'd here which burns
Worse than tears drown. Beseech you all, my lords,
With thoughts so qualified as your charities
Shall best instruct you, measure me; and so
The King's will be perform'd!
. . . . . .
. . . Adieu, my lord.
I never wish'd to see you sorry; now
I trust I shall.

This calm-eyed greatness of soul, this pathetic dignity move our deepest loyalty, and stir in us a kind of reverence. There is an awful beauty in such still, unshaken virtue.

The plea of Hermione at her trial is certainly one of the most affecting passages in Shakespeare. It is the union of intense emotion with perfect calm and self-possession that makes her words go straight to our hearts. One can see the whole scene:—The dark, uneasy-eyed Leontes, tormented

by his jealousy, and tormented the more because he has a haunting feeling that he may be wrong; the ring of pitying nobles, the tears almost forcing themselves into their eyes, and their hands playing nervously with the swords they can hardly keep undrawn, and, in the center, the tall pale statue-like figure of Hermione, speaking slowly those plain noble words, every one from the bottom of her deep woman's heart. She will only assert her innocence; she will not condescend to parley and argument. Nay she would hardly consent to speak at all for the sake of her own life, or even her own fame,—they are in the keeping of a higher court than that; but her mother's heart is almost breaking to think that the boy she loves and the babe just born must bear the stigma of her shame. It is for them she speaks:

> for honour,
> 'Tis a derivative from me to mine,
> And only that I stand for. I appeal
> To your own conscience, sir, before Polixenes
> Came to your court, how I was in your grace,
> How merited to be so; since he came,
> With what encounter so uncurrent I
> Have strain'd to appear thus; if one jot beyond
> The bound of honour, or in act or will
> That way inclining, hard'ned be the hearts
> Of all that hear me, and my near'st of kin
> Cry fie upon my grave!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> More than mistress of
> Which comes to me in name of fault, I must not
> At all acknowledge. For Polixenes,
> With whom I am accus'd, I do confess
> I lov'd him as in honour he requir'd,
> With such a kind of love as might become
> A lady like me, with a love even such,
> So and no other, as yourself commanded;
> Which not to have done I think had been in me
> Both disobedience and ingratitude
> To you and toward your friend. . . .
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Sir, spare your threats.
> The bug which you would fright me with I seek;
> To me can life be no commodity.

The crown and comfort of my life, your favour,
I do give lost; for I do feel it gone,
But know not how it went. My second joy
And first-fruits of my body, from his presence
I am barr'd, like one infectious. My third comfort,
Starr'd most unluckily, is from my breast,
The innocent milk in it most innocent mouth,
Hal'd out to murder; . . .
. . . . . .
. . . lastly, hurried
Here to this place, i' the open air, before
I have got strength of limit. Now, my liege,
Tell me what blessings I have here alive,
That I should fear to die? Therefore proceed.
But yet hear this: mistake me not; no life,
I prize it not a straw, but for mine honour,
Which I would free,—if I shall be condemn'd
Upon surmises, all proofs sleeping else
But what your jealousies awake, I tell you
'Tis rigour and not law. . . .

As she ends, and knows that all is hopeless, she murmurs, "O that my father were alive,"

and here beholding
His daughter's trial! that he did but see
The flatness of my misery, yet with eyes
Of pity, not revenge!

Yet all this she could have endured,—the suspicions, the charge, the sentence, the reversal of the oracle,—all of it her firm determination might have borne up under; but when at that moment comes the news that her boy, her first-born, is dead for very grief and pity of that sorrow he cannot understand,—it is too much. Her mother's heart breaks; she swoons away, and is carried out for dead.

One should have a word for Paulina, who champions the cause of Hermione so bravely, if not so wisely. Paulina is a kind of mixture of Portia and Mrs. Caudle. She has a very noble and generous heart, and—a tongue. She is one of those persons who think the truth should be spoken at all times, and who is never afraid to speak it. It is a real comfort to us to hear her tell Leontes what she thinks of him,

but he takes little comfort from it, and what is worse he probably takes little profit from it either; for Paulina is certainly not always judicious in her utterances. Her bravery in forcing herself into the presence of Leontes with the babe of Hermione does more credit to her heart than her head; for she might have known that at such a time nothing would be so sure to exasperate him.

PAUL. Good my liege, I come;
And, I beseech you, hear me. . . .
I say, I come
From your good queen.
LEON. Good queen!
PAUL. Good queen, my lord,
Good queen; I say good queen;
And would by combat make her good, so were I
A man, the worst about you.
LEON. Force her hence.
PAUL. Let him that makes but trifles of his eyes
First hand me. On mine own accord I'll off,
But first I'll do my errand. The good queen,
For she is good, hath brought you forth a daughter;
Here 't is; commends it to your blessing.

. . . . . .

LEON. I'll ha' thee burnt.
PAUL. I care not;
It is an heretic that makes the fire,
Not she which burns in 't. I'll not call you tyrant;
But this most cruel usage of your queen,
Not able to produce more accusation
Than your own weak-hing'd fancy, something savours
Of tyranny, and will ignoble make you,
Yea, scandalous to the world.

. . . . . .

I pray you, do not push me; I'll be gone.
Look to your babe, my lord:

Paulina is not likely to be over-tender in speech to any one. "If I prove honey-mouthed, let my tongue blister," says she; she was in no danger of that trouble, I think. She is plainly one of those ladies who set a high estimate upon the power of emphatic advice. She doesn't think that the truth ought to hurt any one's feelings, and isn't over careful about a

"sweet reasonableness" of manner. Yet those are often very bright truths that fly like sparks from the hot heart of Paulina, and her devotion to Hermione is so entire and unselfish that we cannot withhold our admiration from it. A brave, kindly, sound-hearted woman,—though perhaps one is a little glad she is in his neighbor's family. The highest proof at once of her self-forgetfulness and her self-command is that for sixteen long years she was the companion of Hermione's solitude and never once betrayed it,—and that with her gift of speech. I'm not sure but this is the greatest impossibility in the play. Shakespeare, however, has been careful to remind us in the last Act that whenever, in those years, she found silence over-burdensome, she could take opportunity to stir up the gift that was in her by putting Leontes in remembrance of his past, and keeping alive in him a wholesome feeling of penitence. And then it must be noted, that Paulina really found a kind of satisfaction in the management of this affair. For such women as she are never content unless they can load upon themselves a burden of other people's cares, and they are sure to find or make some one miserable enough to put a pleasant strain upon their sympathies. And I suppose that was why when Hermione is united to her husband again and that charge removed from Paulina, Leontes advises her to remarry and recommends Camillo to her care; he knew that such a talent for anxiety could not safely go unemployed.

With the close of the Third Act the tragic part of the play ends. Sixteen years have passed away when we enter, in the next Act, that pleasant pastoral land of Bohemia, which I think must lie not far from the forest of Arden. The Fourth Act is an idyl. The babe of Hermione, Perdita, the lost one, has been found and has grown to the verge of womanhood in this delightful country, under the care of a most exemplary old Shepherd and his wife whom she regards as her parents. And now she is wooed by the son of King Polixenes, Prince Florizel, who is too frank and good to keep anything from Perdita, but will conceal from every

one else his noble birth, and so comes to pay court to this charming lass in the guise of a shepherd.

The first stranger we meet, however, in this pleasant country is a character succinctly described in the list of dramatis personæ as "Autolycus—a rogue."

> "When daffodils begin to peer,
> With heigh! the doxy over the dale,
> Why, then comes in the sweet o' the year;
> For the red blood reigns in the winter's pale.
>
> "The white sheet bleaching on the hedge,
> With heigh! the sweet birds, O, how they sing!
> Doth set my pugging tooth on edge;
> For a quart of ale is a dish for a king."

I think it was a professor of Moral Philosophy,—Wilson of Edinburgh,—who said he thanked God that he had never lost his liking for bad company. Shakespeare, I take it, must have had a similar feeling. I'm sure that in the quiet and freedom of his outdoor life at Stratford he must have found such a precious vagabond as Autolycus a delightful recreation, even if some of the family linen did sometimes disappear mysteriously. For this last of Shakespeare's delectable rogues has a laughing, boyish, roving temper which must have something seductive in it to any man not altogether hidebound in conventions and proprieties. He appeals to that native impulse to vagrancy which we all feel now and then. We never get beyond a disposition to play truant sometimes from the duties and dignities of life.

As to the thievish propensities of Autolycus they are so natural to him, that you can hardly blame him any more than you can the robin that takes the cherries from your trees. The warmth of spring and the song of birds stirs in him an instinct for roving and roguing, and he really seems not quite responsible for his small knaveries. Society has never been able to force its conventions upon him; he is still in a state of nature. There's nothing criminal about him; he doesn't accept your ideas of property, that's all. He has tried some more methodical ways of life in his time,—has

been an ape-bearer, a process-server, has carried about a puppet-show of the Prodigal Son, and, with a desperate resolve to settle in life, once married a tinker's widow: but all these attempts put too much restraint on the natural freedom of his disposition, and he has now subsided into plain rogue. But he is a most picturesque and versatile rogue. "He will sing you several tunes faster than you'll tell money," and when he chooses to turn peddler he will cry his ribbons and broideries till "you would think a smock was a she-angel, he so chants to the sleeve-hand and the work about the square on't."

> "Lawn as white as driven snow;
> Cyprus black as e'er was crow;
> . . . . . .
> Bugle-bracelet, necklace amber,
> Perfume for a lady's chamber;
> . . . . . .
> Come buy of me, come; come buy, come buy;
> Buy, lads, or else your lasses cry.
> Come buy."

As an instance of his light-fingered exploits recall the scene in which the Shepherd's son falls a victim to his arts (IV, iii, 38-121). Evidently the exploits of Autolycus are prompted not so much by a love of larceny and lucre as by a love of fun and frolic; and I'm afraid it's quite hopeless to expect any amendment from him. When at last he stumbles into good luck, and sees that he might make his fortune as a courtier, he finds that he has still too strong a dash of the old life in him to care for any other and we are left to infer that he ends his career in the profession of his father,—"a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles."

All the exquisite pastoral beauty of this Fourth Act, the homely shepherd's truth, the rustic mirth, and song, and dance, and flowers, they all only form a background and setting for Perdita who moves among her simple flowers, herself the sweetest flower of all. Perdita is quite the most charming girl I ever met—in books. No wonder Florizel is in love with her; I'm sure I've been ever since I was about

his age. In the first place, she is so fair. No one sees her without some sudden word of admiration. King Polixenes, who has something of a grudge against her for having won the heart of his boy, cannot avoid exclaiming, "This is the prettiest low-born lass that ever ran on the green-sward." "Good sooth, she is the queen of curds and cream," says old Camillo; "I should leave grazing, were I of your flock, and only live by gazing." When she comes to Sicily, the gentleman that announces her arrival can hardly keep his enthusiasm within bounds, "Ay, the most peerless piece of earth, I think, that e'er the sun shone bright on." And King Leontes himself when first he sees her, not knowing she is his daughter, can hardly take his eyes from her face.

And to this beauty she adds a natural grace, an artlessness, a delicacy which are quite bewitching. It is as if the sweet pastoral beauties of nature amid which she has grown up had somehow embodied themselves in her, and lent to her a grace to mold the maiden's form by silent sympathy. So that Florizel's praise seems no lover's flattery, but only an involuntary tribute to her artless charm of demeanor:

> What you do
> Still betters what is done. When you speak, sweet,
> I'd have you do it ever; when you sing,
> I'd have you buy and sell so, so give alms,
> Pray so; and for the ord'ring your affairs,
> To sing them too. When you do dance, I wish you
> A wave o' the sea, that you might ever do
> Nothing but that; move still, still so,
> And own no other function. Each your doing,
> So singular in each particular,
> Crowns what you are doing in the present deeds,
> That all your acts are queens.

She is but a girl yet, hardly in the spring of womanhood; and there is a delightful youth and freshness in all she says and does. She accepts the love of Florizel with a girlish pride mixed with sweet timidity. And in truth both lovers are so young and innocent that at the first word of endearment from either, the true blood looks out at the cheeks of both. But Perdita is her mother's own daughter, and in all

her young gayety there is a certain quietness and elegance which give an added charm to her beauty. 'Nothing she does or says but smacks of something greater than herself.' Without the slightest trace of affectation or prudery, there is yet a still maidenly dignity of manner in all her lightest conversation with Florizel which is indescribably fascinating. It is this which makes her seem to Florizel so pure and high, and puts into his affection that tinge of reverence which there must ever be in any worthy love of man for woman. This modest dignity much becomes her when she presides at the sheep-shearing festival. She blushes to see herself in the fantastic attire in which she has been prankt up for the occasion, and timidly shrinks from assuming the foremost place in the rustic company; but at the bidding of the old Shepherd she takes upon herself the hostess-ship of the day, and welcomes her guests with a quiet grace that wins our hearts as surely as it did Florizel's.

And then how perfectly truthful and conscientious she is. The dear maid cannot abide anything that reminds her of artifice or falsity. You remember her pretty conceit about her flowers (IV, iv, 79 ff.). She cannot follow the reasoning of Polixenes, indeed she doesn't try to, and cuts it short by courteously assenting to his conclusion; but she is of the same opinion still. However you may argue about it she knows she cannot like those flowers which do not grow as nature meant them to, and she'll not put dibble in the earth to set one slip of them. She loves truth and hates logic,—true little woman that she is. And then as she turns to Florizel and her other younger guests who are not strangers, her shyness vanishes, and she gives them their flowers with such dainty words of poetry as add new beauty and new fragrance to her gift, and show how delicate is the imagination and how exquisite the poetic sense of the fair young giver:

> Now, my fair'st friend,
> I would I had some flowers o' the spring that might
> Become your time of day; and yours, and yours,
> . . . . . .

> . . . O Proserpina,
> For the flowers now, that frighted thou let'st fall
> From Dis's waggon! daffodils,
> That come before the swallow dares, and take
> The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,
> But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes
> Or Cytherea's breath; . . .
> . . . . . .
> . . . bold oxlips and
> The crown imperial; lilies of all kinds,
> The flower-de-luce being one! O, these I lack.
> To make you garlands of, and my sweet friend,
> To strew him o'er and o'er!

Nowhere in all the gardens of the poets will you find a fairer nosegay than that or a sweeter maid to pluck it. Did you notice that line about the violet? I do not believe that you can find anywhere else in our language or any other a description of the color of the wood violet—palest blue just passing into creamy white—at once so faithful and so daintily poetic as that,—"Violets dim, but sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes."

And when King Polixenes throws off his disguise, and with a harshness that he finds it rather hard to assume before such innocence and truth commands the young lovers to separate forever, then you shall see that this girl Perdita has already something of her mother's queenly loftiness of spirit, her mother's unselfishness, and her mother's power of still and patient endurance:

> Even here undone!
> I was not much afeard; for once or twice
> I was about to speak, and tell him plainly
> The self-same sun that shines upon his court
> Hides not his visage from our cottage, but
> Looks on alike. Will 't please you, sir, be gone?
> I told you what would come of this. Beseech you,
> Of your own state take care. This dream of mine,—
> Being now awake, I'll queen it no inch farther,
> But milk my ewes and weep.
> . . . . . .
> How often have I told you 't would be thus!

How often said, my dignity would last
But 'till 't were known!

Young Florizel, whose pure and chivalrous love for Perdita has made a man of him, now shows in his emergency of what stuff he is made, and takes the hand of Perdita to front their adverse fates with a firm and calm decision worthy the son of a king. "Lift up thy looks," he says to Perdita, and then:

From my succession wipe me, father; I
Am heir to my affection.

. . . . . .

CAM. This is desperate, sir.
FLO. So call it; but it does fulfill my vow;
I needs must think it honesty. Camillo,
Not for Bohemia, nor the pomp that may
Be thereat gleaned, for all the sun sees or
The close earth wombs or the profound seas hides
In unknown fathoms, will I break my oath
To this my fair belov'd.

Where will you find a more true and goodly pair of young lovers than these? Shakespeare has placed them amid peaceful scenes of beauty and innocence, too young to have known as yet the sorrows and the hardships of the world, and looking forward with steadfast eye to all the trouble before them, calm in the sense of mutual love and faith. I always fancy that Shakespeare dwelt long and lovingly over this scene when he wrote it, looking backward it may be upon his own vanished youth, looking it may be with a father's tender pride upon his own daughter now blooming into womanhood, and feeling deep in his heart a yearning sense of that young love and purity not yet brought near to any great sin or any great sorrow, and of that calm young confidence of spirit not yet buffeted and broken by the smitings of life. Sure I am that no man can set in his imagination that fair picture of early love and purity without finding in it forever a true refection of soul.

The last Act of this Winter's Tale contains only the story of the finding of the lost and the knitting up again of

the ties that had been severed so long. No one of Shakespeare's plays, I think, is rounded to such a perfect close, so satisfying all our most generous feelings and leaving us with a long-drawn breath of deep and glad content. It is as if the great dramatist would end his last work, as he hoped to end his life, in the full quiet joy of home.

Perdita and Florizel, after some aid from that good rogue Autolycus, and a variety of adventures doubtless quite possible in Bohemia, reach the court of Sicily and throw themselves upon the protection of King Leontes. Florizel's father, King Polixenes, follows hard after them, and arrives just in time to be present at the opening by the old Shepherd of that precious fardel which contains the proof that Perdita verily is the lost daughter of Leontes and Hermione. The father takes his child to his heart with fast-flowing tears in which joy of the present and sorrow for the past are strangely mingled; the two old Kings, who have not seen each other since that dark day sixteen years before when they parted in suspicion and anger, now take hands again with silent tears of forgiveness and reconciliation, blessing their united children, while they think with full hearts upon that queenly mother who stood with them when last they were in this hall together. Shakespeare does not show us this scene, but tells us the story of it by a third person, chiefly, I suppose, because he would not diminish the effect of that last scene of all, which is the climax of the play. For Hermione is not really dead, you know. All this time she has been in retirement, in a removed house which twice or thrice a day Paulina hath visited.

I believe it has been sometimes objected that this long seclusion of the Queen is unnatural or unkind to Leontes. But I cannot understand it thus. What else could she have done? For the difference between them was not a passing quarrel to be made up to-morrow, but a deep and abiding breach of trust. To a high-souled woman like Hermione, with a profound sense of the sacredness of her plighted love and truth, such a suspicion as that of Leontes was an immeasurable wrong. There was no sullen resent-

ment nourished in her heart during all those years; but that deep wound to her woman's honor could not be speedily healed by any easy words of penitence or of promise. She could bear it with queenly patience if she might be alone,—but that was all. After that dreadful experience she could not easily believe that her husband's trust in her would ever grow firm and sound again. Her love for him she kept true; she could have forgiven him in his penitence and grief; but she could not trust him again. To take her place by his side once more in the old scenes, with the old cruel memory that would not die, with the ever-present dread that the old baseless suspicion might still be rankling in her husband's heart,—that she could not do!

And she would never have done it had it not been for Perdita. The oracle had given a doubtful hope that the lost babe might sometime be found, and she had always cherished that shadowy hope as the one possibility of future happiness. And now that Perdita had been found and restored to her father, now that her husband and Polixenes had embraced again in forgiveness of the past, and were looking forward to the wedding of their children, Hermione could maintain her concealment no longer. She must see her child; and now, surely, over that daughter the father and mother can forget the painful past and knit up the old love in perfect truth. Perdita had separated them; she alone could unite them.

And so the two Kings, with Perdita and Florizel, have accompanied Paulina to that removed house to see the famous statue of the Queen by Giulio Romano. This central device of the last scene is one of the most boldly simple that Shakespeare ever attempted, and only with such a calm, statuesque character as Hermione could it have been made possible. As it is, I do not know a more touching or a more noble scene. It is very impressive on the stage; yet there is nothing forced or theatrical about it. The very surprise and wonder of it seem natural and fitting. You remember the group: Leontes full of bitter sweet memories and deep compunction of soul, as if he felt himself hardly

worthy to see even the statue of her he had so wronged; the sympathizing Polixenes; fair Perdita herself almost as pale as marble, speechless in wonder and veneration before the form of the mother she has never known. Words would mar the perfect joy of that reunion; and Hermione speaks not one. Only when Paulina leads Perdita to kneel with trembling joy at her mother's feet, then the tears of Hermione gush forth and she breaks her long silence:

> You gods, look down
> And from your sacred vials pour your graces
> Upon my daughter's head! Tell me, mine own,
> Where hast thou been preserv'd? where liv'd?

What scene could we better choose to keep in our recollection as we take leave of Shakespeare than this one, very likely the last he ever wrote. Surely it is not idle to think that such passages as these may show us in what atmosphere of quiet domestic love and content Shakespeare passed his latest days. When he drew the noble, the injured, the forgiving Hermione, surely he could have had no one else in his thought than his own Anne Hathaway. It would take very much more than any paltry story of the bequest of a second-best bed to make me believe that the afternoon of this man's life was not passed in the sunshine of that same affection which had burst upon his young manhood in the days of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* more than a score of years before; which had, though perhaps sorely tried, followed him with benediction in all his darkest days, and embosomed him to the last.

This man's knowledge of human life was such as no other poet could ever boast; the range of character his creative imagination has made to live before us is marvelously wide; but I like to think that this our greatest poet, nay I make bold to say the world's greatest poet, however wide the circuit of his work, closed it at last with loving pictures of those pure domestic affections that consecrate the names of wife and mother and bloom fair in the garden of home.

SHAKESPEARE THE MAN

I HAVE heard somewhere of an Irish Member on the floor of the House of Commons, who, after wrestling some time rather ineffectually with the difficulties of his subject, at last gave it up in despair, exclaiming as he sat down, "Mr. Speaker, I am bothered entirely for the lack of preliminary information." Any one who ventures to speak upon the man Shakespeare, will of course experience something of the same difficulty. We have no biography of the man. We never can have. All the certain facts of his career can be stated in two or three sentences. Nor is it easy, we are told, to discover in the great array of characters he has drawn, any clear outline of his own personality; we are thwarted by the intensely dramatic character of his genius. Hamlet and Brutus and Antony; Cordelia and Rosalind and Imogen and all the rest of the wonderful company,—these we know; but Shakespeare we have never heard speak.

So true is this that some very competent students and lovers of Shakespeare have pronounced the effort to form any clear picture of his personality hopeless and futile. "Shakespeare," says Browning, "never so little left his bosom's gate ajar." Says Matthew Arnold:

> Others abide our question. Thou art free.
> We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still.

Sir Sidney Lee, in the latest edition of his *Life of Shakespeare,* avers that "no critical test has yet been found whereby to disentangle Shakespeare's personal feelings or opinions from those which he imputes to the creatures of his dramatic world."

Yet I must think such statements are exaggerated. The

facts we know of Shakespeare's life are certainly meager; but they are in several respects very significant. And are his plays so dramatic as to conceal their author entirely? Can anybody conceive it possible that a man should write over thirty great plays and never disclose anything of his own moral and emotional nature, his cast of mind and habits of observation? Of course no one thinks that we can read in any of Shakespeare's plays an exact transcript of his experience or of any phase of that experience. Everything is modified, transformed by his imagination. It may be difficult to find in his dramas his particular likes and dislikes; the more important question is, what sort of man must he have been who could make us acquainted with all this world of men and women? How did he himself come to know so many? Doubtless the picture we can form of Shakespeare's personality may be somewhat lacking in sharp, well-defined features; so is the picture you form of half of the men you know on the street. And as a rule, the more full and well-rounded a nature, the more difficult is it to analyze and depict. We incline to measure men by their limitations and their peculiarities. Eccentricities and prejudices are handy pegs on which to hang our labels, and a crank is much more easily imagined than a sage. But no man can read through Shakespeare's plays without forming at least some conception of Shakespeare's character. He knows for example, as Professor Bradley has said, that these plays could not have been written by such a man as Milton or Shelley or Wordsworth, and I am ready to add, by such a man as Bacon.

I wish then to state some few traits of the man William Shakespeare which I think we may all see in his life or infer from his work. First, consider for a moment the unquestioned facts of his life. They are only these. He was born probably on April 23, 1564. He married, after only once calling of the banns, at the age of eighteen, a woman eight years his senior; after his marriage he went up to London. How long after, we do not know. One of the best students of his life thinks it must have been

as early as 1582. Another thinks that it could not have been earlier than 1586. What he went to London for we do not know, or what he did when he got there; only in 1592, when he had been in London six to ten years, do we find the first mention of him as a playwright whose success was provoking the jealousy of his rivals. From that time for some fifteen years his plays were appearing in rapid succession; a casual mention by a minor writer shows that by 1598 he had written as many as twelve. Of his life during those London years we know only one thing,—we know that he was not only making plays, but making money and investing it carefully and wisely. By 1605 he had purchased real estate in and near his native town of Stratford-on-Avon to the value of 920 pounds, which we may estimate as equivalent to about $60,000 nowadays, and he certainly had other property in London also. Finally, somewhere between 1608 to 1611, he retired from London and came home to Stratford to spend the remainder of his days in the goodly house which he had purchased as early as 1597, and in which he died in 1616. These are all the facts we know beyond question; you can put them all into a sentence. He married at eighteen a wife who was twenty-five or twenty-six; at about twenty-one went up to London; in the course of the next twenty years achieved immortality and a rent-roll; at thirty-four bought a house and corner lot in his native village; at about forty-five settled down there to reside; at fifty-two died. That is the whole story.

Of course a great body of tradition has collected around these facts,—that the young Shakespeare was a schoolmaster, a butcher, that he went up to London because of a difficulty over a deer-stealing adventure in Sir Thomas Lucy's park, that he held horses at the theater door, that he played the part of the ghost in *Hamlet* and did not play it well, that he was lame, that the Earl of Southampton gave him a thousand pounds for no clearly assigned reason, that he died of a fever brought on by drinking too late at Stratford one night with his old friend Ben Jonson,

that he himself composed the doggerel verses on his tombstone,—of such traditions there is legion, some of which may be true, more are probably false, and none can be certain. Then the undoubted facts of his life have given rise to numerous conjectures equally uncertain. Because he married, apparently with some haste, a woman eight years older than himself, it has been conjectured that the marriage proved an unhappy one, though there is not a particle of evidence that it did. Then Shakespeare wrote a most interesting series of sonnets that seem to be autobiographical; many of us think they are autobiographical, and would throw a great deal of light on Shakespeare's London life if we could only agree upon any interpretation of them. And then comes Sir Sidney Lee and avers that nothing whatever can be inferred from the order of the sonnets, and that most of them have very slight autobiographical value, if any at all.

But throwing aside all tradition and doubtful conjecture, what can we read in the plain, unquestioned facts of this life? Can we form no conception of the eager youth who, refusing to measure his love by his fortune, makes a perhaps rash, certainly not a careful and prudent, marriage; then, when the children come, goes up to London, carrying nothing of experience save what he has gained in the little provincial town and nothing of learning save the small Latin and less Greek that he has learned in the grammar school of that town; toils at the work he has chosen from four to seven years before he can see any one of his plays acted upon the stage and his great career really beginning? For you know there was nothing really precocious about the genius of Shakespeare. *Venus and Adonis,* which he says was the "first heir of the invention," was not published until 1593, when he was twenty-nine years old, though possibly written a little earlier. *Love's Labour's Lost,* probably the first play written entirely by him, may be dated possibly as early as 1591. What of those years of apprenticeship in London? How comes it that the youngster who at twenty or twenty-one is holding horses

at the theater door or playing minor parts on the stage, at twenty-eight or twenty-nine is writing a poem that he ventures to dedicate to the Earl of Southampton and is a dangerous rival to the foremost playwrights of the day? Grant his genius, admit that he must have had by nature marvelous gifts of expression; yet such a record proves a great intensity of nature and an impassioned interest in human life.

But his London life surely proves also that, however intense and impassioned his temperament, he must have had it under control. The Shakespeare of the London years was no mere Bohemian, still less was he, like Marlowe and Greene and almost all his fellow playwrights, a reckless and dissolute man. Nobody claims that his life in those years can be proved altogether exemplary. If, as seems to me probable, the sonnets are mostly autobiographical, there is indication in some of them of an episode of darker passion which for a time overcame his conscience and his reason. It is just possible that some of the stories of irregularities in those years have some foundation, though nothing of the kind rests on any good evidence. On the contrary, the only bit of documentary evidence as to Shakespeare's private life in London, recently discovered by our American scholar, Professor Wallace, proves that, for some years before and after 1604, he was living in the house of one Mountjoy, a Huguenot refugee, maker of ladies' head-dresses, and that he took a practical and kindly interest in the domestic affairs of that family. And we certainly need no evidence that a man of reckless and dissolute life could not have written two or three plays a year for twelve or fourteen years, plays steadily growing in intellectual power and moral soundness with every year. And if you say this is accounted for by his wonderful genius, then remember the bare fact I have mentioned, that all through those years he was making money,—not spending it, but saving it, investing it shrewdly and collecting his rents and income very rigorously. This is the one thing in his career about which there can be no doubt. There

are, I know, people who find it difficult to associate such thrift with the highest poetical genius, and get a kind of shock at knowing that Shakespeare prosecuted a townsman for a debt of one pound ten shillings' worth of malt while he was writing *Macbeth*. But nothing can be more certain, I think, than that the genius of the man William Shakespeare had a foundation of solid common sense and business sagacity.

One other thing notice. However long his stay in London, however many the attractions and distractions of life there, he always considered Stratford-on-Avon his home and always intended to return there. The earliest plays, like *Love's Labour's Lost, The Two Gentlemen of Verona,* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* are full of reminiscences of Stratford. In the *Midsummer Night,* indeed, you may say there is nothing else; and the latest plays, especially *The Winter's Tale,* if I read it aright, are full of the deep and quiet satisfaction of return to early life and early love. There is no evidence, then, that Shakespeare had forsaken or forgotten his wife and children at home. With what was probably the first considerable sum of money he could save he bought for them in 1597 a goodly house in Stratford, and the following years proceeded to put it in repair and plant an orchard about it. For the next twelve years he would seem to have spent annually in New Place and in the purchase or lease of real estate in the vicinity, sums equivalent to nearly four thousand dollars a year. He was not indifferent to outward tokens of rank, and as early as 1599 succeeded in obtaining the grant to bear a coat of arms, for which his father had applied unsuccessfully. When he came back to Stratford about 1610, he was probably in wealth and social consideration the most important person in his native village.

Now I wish to put beside these facts, which may seem to indicate a nature unattractively mundane and practical, the only two recorded comments made upon Shakespeare's nature by eye-witnesses during those London years. A publisher named Chettle says he is sorry for having printed

some months before depreciatory remarks with reference to Shakespeare's works, because he has himself since come to know him personally and seen his demeanor, "no less civil than he is excellent in the quality he professes." Besides, he adds, other people have reported "his uprightness of dealing which argues his honesty." Honesty, you know, meant more then than at present. It meant honor, courtesy. And Ben Jonson, who knew him well, declared, "I loved the man and do honor his memory on this side idolatry as much as any. He was indeed honest, and of an open and free nature." And in Jonson's lines on the folio portrait he says, you remember,

> This figure that thou here seest put,
> It was for gentle Shakespeare cut.

That epithet "gentle" seems to have been often applied to Shakespeare in later years. Doubtless it has a wide and vague meaning, but it always implies at least something of courtesy and affability. Men never spoke of gentle Marlowe, or even, I should say, of gentle John Milton. Such testimonies, meager as they are, certainly give us some hints of the temperament which one thinks made friends for Shakespeare in those London years among all sorts of people, from the brilliant young Earl of Southampton to the plain Huguenot "tire-maker," Mountjoy, in whose house he lived.

And now this picture of the man Shakespeare that we form from the meager facts of his life is confirmed, I believe, by the inferences we draw from the dramas. In the first place the range and variety of the persons in those dramas is proof of the openness and geniality of Shakespeare's temper as a man. How did he come to create so many different men and women,—some seven hundred of them? I say create; but strictly speaking the imagination never does create. It only expands, transforms, and combines the elements of experience into new wholes. Shakespeare in some sense must have known something of all those people, and he could not have known them if he had

not been a companionable man who liked people and was liked by them. Your great dramatist can never be a lofty, isolated man like Milton, or a visionary idealist like Shelley, or a misanthrope like Swift, or a philosopher like Coleridge, or a retired and solitary thinker like Wordsworth. These men may know something of what they call human nature, as they learn it by introspection and reflection, but they do not know men and women, they do not know life. They have each only a narrow circle of friends. But for Shakespeare the world was full of interesting folk. Of narrative invention he had comparatively little; the plots of his plays, as everybody knows, are all borrowed, and sometimes not very well borrowed, put together in hasty, impossible fashion. But the characters are always vital—real men and women. You feel sure that Shakespeare has known them. He was not, I suppose, a reader of many books; Holinshed's *Chronicles* for English history, and Plutarch's *Lives* for the classical world seem to have sufficed him. But the characters whom he found in books lived in his imagination as really as those that had entered there through his marvelous observation.

Indeed, observation is hardly the word to describe the method of Shakespeare's acquaintance with men and things. It implies too passive a relation. His observation proper was indeed marvelously exact, his eye marvelously acute. He saw common things, for example, as you and I do not. Do you know what is the most characteristic thing about a violet? That it is modest or humble? Anybody knows that. That it is blue? Thousands of flowers are blue,—though, if Shakespeare wished to mention its color he would be likely to specify in some poetic way the shade of blue, as of the pale wood violet, of which he says it is sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes. But Shakespeare noticed that the most characteristic thing about a violet is that it has a habit of gently nodding on its stem,

> Where oxslips and the nodding violet grows.

Or, again,

As gentle
As zephyrs blowing below the violet,
Not wagging his sweet head.

Did you ever notice that? Do you know just how many spots there are in the bottom of a cowslip? Shakespeare did:

On her left breast
A mole cinque-spotted like the crimson drops
I' the bottom of a cowslip.

Scores of examples of this nicety of vision might be cited if I were talking of Shakespeare's poetry, but what I am now insisting is that his larger observation of men and things was always active. It not only sees, it interprets what he sees. Shakespeare's temperament, we feel sure, was always alert and eager. He lived with men, he knew men, was spontaneously interested in and sympathized with them.

Consider his humor, for a man's humor is generally a pretty good test of his attitude towards his fellow men and his enjoyment of life. What a genial and kindly humor it is. He does not care much for loud and empty mirth; there is not in his plays much of that laughter that is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. His best comedies, like *As You Like It,* seem an expression of the full, healthy joyousness of living. But while his humor of course usually plays about some of the manifold contrasts and inconsistencies of this varied life of ours, his humorous people are never mere eccentrics or freaks; they all belong to our family. We must own them as men and brothers. There are in the company, for example, a good many of those people whom we, when we see them in real life, are apt to classify complacently as stupid people,—Mrs. Quickly, Dogberry, Verges, Bardolph, Shallow, Slender, and all the rest. Yet Shakespeare never assumes any air of superiority to them. He vastly enjoys their company, and, what is more to the point, you are sure they enjoyed his. Often his humor is so touched with kindly human sympathy that it

seems to shade imperceptibly into pathos. You remember old Justice Shallow's reminiscences with Cousin Silence, "Jesu, Jesu, the mad days that I have spent! And to see how many of my old acquaintances are dead!" "We shall all follow," says Silence. "Certain, 'tis certain; very sure, very sure. Death, as the Psalmist saith, is certain to all; all shall die. How a good yoke of bullocks at Stamford fair?" And everybody remembers Mrs. Quickly's account of the last moments of Jack Falstaff. "After I saw him fumble with the sheets and play with flowers, and smile upon his fingers' ends, I knew there was but one way; for his nose was as sharp as a pen, and a' babbled of green fields."

Not that Shakespeare's humor never has a satiric quality, but he generally reserves his satire for those people who are somehow hollow, who assume an inflated dignity or bigness,—Bottom, old Polonius, Malvolio, ancient Pistol, and their like. These people he laughs at, rather than laughs with. What Carlyle somewhere calls "pretentious ineptitude," was evidently very amusing to Shakespeare, but also somewhat annoying. Yet even here his humor is not bitter or cynical. The generally cynical temper seemed a tragic thing to Shakespeare,—as you can see in his *Timon,*—a thing to be pitied or feared.

Are there then no types of character that this man really hated? Well, not many; the man who really knows men and women as Shakespeare did, will find something to touch his sympathy in almost every life. "Hate that man," said Charles Lamb once, "how could I hate him? Don't I know him?" Yet there were men whom Shakespeare I think regarded with unmixed aversion, almost hatred. Who is the worst man in Shakespeare's world? Everybody will say without much hesitation, Iago. Why? Because Iago is the embodiment of absolute selfishness. Envy and the love of personal power make him blind to innocence and contemptuous of virtue. A hard, deceitful, scheming, merciless man. Goneril and Regan, in *Lear,* belong to the same class. Now a nature like Shakespeare's,

open and free, as Ben Jonson called it, finds such characters as these intolerable.

Do we find any confirmation in the dramas for that practical wisdom, that power of self-control which seems so certain in the meager records of Shakespeare's London life? I think we can. I find that in Shakespeare's world it is just this practical wisdom, this poise and self-control that insures success and consideration. Says Hamlet to Horatio,—

> Blest are those
> Whose blood and judgement are so well commingled
> That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
> To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
> That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
> In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
> As I do thee.

Now this type of man, strong but well-balanced, self-controlled, cannot be the hero of tragedy and not often of comedy, and so we shall not expect to find many examples of the type in Shakespeare's plays. Yet there are such men, and they always in some way seem to have Shakespeare's approval and admiration. Horatio himself is an example, and Theseus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* and the banished Duke in *As You Like It,* and best of all, Henry the Fifth. It has been often said that Henry the Fifth was Shakespeare's favorite hero; and there is some reason to think so. He has drawn out his story as Prince and King through three plays, and in the choruses of *Henry V,* speaking for once as if in his own person, has given him such enthusiastic praise that it seems probable we have in Henry a type of character Shakespeare himself admired. Now Henry, while he is Prince Hal, cares little for decorum and throws himself heartily enough into the humors of Falstaff and of the Boar's Head. Yet in his wildest days he never quite forgets his duty; and when the call for manly action comes, he is ready, throws off—perhaps rather too cruelly—Falstaff and his roistering companions and takes up the duties of kingship. Yet he keeps

always a certain boyish exuberance of spirits, he likes all sorts of people and, though king, is still a good fellow. But he never loses mastery of himself, he never makes mistakes, he is never impatient, he never gets angry. I think there is a great deal of William Shakespeare in this King Harry the Fifth.

And if this poise and self-control is a condition of success, the lack of it means failure—often tragic failure. In the great tragedies of Shakespeare you will find that the catastrophe comes either from a lack of passion as motive power or from a failure to direct and control such passion. Characters as unlike as Hamlet and Mark Antony both go down because their blood and judgment are not well commingled.

But you will ask, is this all we know of the man Shakespeare, this energetic, facile, kindly, marvelously observant, but rather mundane man that we see in the meager records of his life? Hardly. The deepest things in any man's thinking and feeling, certainly in any poet's thought and feeling, are not seen in the story of his outward business and affairs. Yet up to about 1600, when Shakespeare was, you remember, thirty-six years of age, this is the type of man seen in his work. For, with the exception of the young man's romantic tragedy of love and death, *Romeo and Juliet,* the work is all comedy, dealing mostly with the lighter and more joyous sides of life, or history, in which the fate of the individual is involved in the great sweep of national affairs. Shakespeare, one thinks, as yet has not much considered the deeper and darker problems of life. But then suddenly his work changes. The comedy darkens in *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well,* and then for some five or six years he writes tragedy and nothing but tragedy. Why this change in the temper of his work we do not know, but of one thing we may be quite sure; it was no good easy man, altogether unstirred by stronger passions and unvexed by obstinate questions, that wrote that great series of tragedies, *Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Lear, Antony, Timon.* There are some indications, especially in the son-

nets, of some emotional agitation in Shakespeare's private life about that time. But setting aside all mere conjecture, it is certainly not improbable that something in the intimate personal experience of Shakespeare during those years may have forced his thought upon the great problems of sin and suffering. I have often thought it strange and perhaps significant that the line of tragedies begins with *Hamlet,* the only play in which the tragedy is not external but internal, the tragedy of doubt and skepticism that puzzles the will and benumbs all our active faculties. It is as if at the outset of this tragic period Shakespeare was dwelling in thought not so much upon the external pain and sorrow in this unintelligible world, as upon the meaning and mystery of it all. No other play is so full of spiritual doubt and wonder; no other play suggests so many of those problems for which every thoughtful man sometimes yearns to find solution; no other play is so enfolded in an atmosphere of the supernatural. And in all the later tragedies the interest is primarily ethical, not external; the catastrophe is never merely physical or melodramatic. These tragedies are so supremely great not because of any thrilling dramatic situation or harrowing exhibition of passion, but because of their absolute truth to the deepest and most solemn laws of our human nature. Nowhere has Shakespeare so clearly shown the sternness and sanity of his moral judgments. Sometimes, as in *Macbeth* or *Antony and Cleopatra,* he shows us the inevitable ruin that follows unbridled passion, whether of ambition or of lust. These plays are not didactic in purpose. Shakespeare is no preacher. He is simply holding the mirror up to nature. And he has none of that cheap morality that is afraid to tell the truth. In the play of *Antony and Cleopatra,* for example,—one of the most powerful of his works,—he knows that Antony did not lose the world for nothing. He knows that the pleasures of sin, though they be but for a season, are very real pleasures while they last. And he makes us see it too. As we read, something of the magic of this great queen of the world falls over us. We understand

the enchantment that is upon Antony, and when we understand that we cannot stand aloof in cool indifference and condemn him. Yet all this dazzle of the lust of the eyes and the pride of life does not for a moment blind us to the quality of Antony's action, and the inevitable doom which he is every moment nearing. Precisely there resides the tragedy. We see his manhood ebbing away, his iron resolution growing soft and pliant, and "his captain's heart, which in the scuffles of great fights" had "burst the buckles on his breast," losing its soldier's temper, and, warmed no longer by any chaste or temperate affection, bursting at last in shame and despair. There could be no higher proof of Shakespeare's moral steadiness of vision and self-command than his power to depict with even-handed justice at once the charms and the results of sin.

In the other type of tragedy, like *Othello* and *Lear*, we have that spectacle more awful because more unintelligible, of the triumph of guilt and hatred over innocence and nobility. Such plays leave us dazed in wonder and pity; yet feeling through all confusion and agony of soul that purity and truth are supremely beautiful things, better than happiness, better than life. Who would not rather die as Desdemona than live as Iago? In *Lear* it is the old, gray-haired King, the generous Kent, and the heavenly Cordelia that go down before the awful storm of wrong; but, as the dying King bends, blind and crazed, over the lifeless body of his daughter and moans, "Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little," who does not feel that in all the defeats and contradictions of this unintelligible world the only thing of priceless value is a pure and heroic life?

This great series of tragedies certainly proves that the deeper and darker phases of human life were passing through the study of Shakespeare's imagination in the years from 1600 to 1606, but I do not see that they present anything really inconsistent with the conception of Shakespeare's character that we form from the record of those years or from a study of his earlier work. They enlarge and deepen that conception; they do not contradict it. Nay, in

one respect they confirm it, for, if I mistake not, there is indication even in these tragedies of that breadth of sympathy, that sense of fellowship with all men, which is one of the most obvious traits of the man. An unflinching recognition of the strictest moral laws is not inconsistent with a pity for the victims of their violation. Consider Shakespeare's bad men and women. For only two or three, as I have said, has he an unmixed hatred, but Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra, the King in *Hamlet,* Shylock, and all the rest, it is only with some touch of charity for them and pity for their sin and ruin that we leave them at the last. It was in this large, hopeful, and kindly temper, surely befitting the greatest of dramatists, that Shakespeare looked out upon this world.

I think one is glad to know that this tragic mood was not dominant in the latest work or the latest years of Shakespeare's life. After about twenty years' connection with the stage in London, the purpose we think he had cherished during all those years was fulfilled and Shakespeare came home to Stratford-on-Avon. Sir Sidney Lee thinks it was in 1611. Some students think it may have been a year or two before that. In fact, his return was probably gradual, his visits to Stratford growing more frequent as he gradually gave up his connection with the theater in London; and by 1611 we may believe he was settled for the rest of his life in New Place with his wife and daughters. Now it was pretty certainly in the year 1610-11 that Shakespeare wrote the three plays I think we love best of all,—*Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale,* and *The Tempest.* These plays are not tragedies, nor are they exactly comedies either. They are plays of rest after struggle, of reconciliation after suspicion, of home and finality. In two of them—*Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*—the central character is a wife, cruelly suspected by her husband but winning back at last by unwavering fidelity the trust that has always been deserved. Imogen and Hermione are the crown of womanhood in Shakespeare's world. Then these three plays picture, as never before in Shakespeare's pages, the coy and

gentle charm of girlhood, not now with the rapture of the lover, but with the wise and tender solicitude of a father; it is not Romeo and Juliet, but Prospero and Miranda, Leontes and Perdita. And, furthermore, these plays are redolent of the charm of country life, of green fields and gardens and flowers. We are in the country again, as in the days of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* and Perdita's garden is even lovelier than the bank whereon sometime Titania slept. The plays are as wise as ever; and Shakespeare's grasp of character as firm, and his sense of beauty I think deeper than in the earlier plays; but the glow of passion is cooled and all three plays, whatever the suspicion or harshness in the earlier Acts, all end as with a deep and long-drawn breath of quiet content.

Now I am well aware of the folly of trying to find in Shakespeare's plays any close transcript of the events of his personal career; yet no one can convince me that the general tone of all these last plays is not that of Shakespeare's renewed family life at Stratford-on-Avon. I find no sure evidence that there was ever any estrangement or jealousy between Shakespeare and his wife during his long years in London; but if there had been, I am sure it was over by 1610. That such a play as *The Winter's Tale* could have been written in that society which the experience of Solomon pronounces worse than "a continual dropping in a very rainy day,"—that would be stranger than any miracle. No, I feel sure that the record of those latest years, as interpreted by these plays, may make us certain that Shakespeare, like Wordworth's Happy Warrior, was after all, certainly in these later years,

> a Soul whose master-bias leans
> To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes,

and that however wide the circuit of his work, he closes it at last with pictures of those affections that bloom fair in the garden of home.

The image we can thus form of the man must at best be somewhat vague, lacking in those specific and picturesque

features in which character is most easily read; but I think we can be sure of its main outlines,—a positive, well-balanced man, of strong passions under firm control, genial and interested in all sorts of people, with marvelous powers of observation and an imagination to interpret all he saw into lasting forms of life and beauty. And I think one's conception of Shakespeare's character loses something of breadth and truth when we try to separate the man from the poet, as I have half unconsciously been doing. For we tend to forget that there were not two Shakespeares. The poet who ruled a vast demesne on the heights of Parnassus was the same man who owned a house and corner lot in Stratford-on-Avon. The dramatist whose speech delights us by an affluence of power and beauty such as none of his contemporaries could approach, is the same man who could lean over the gate of New Place of a morning to jest with Dogberry or chat with Goodman Verges. And in opposition to all that has been said about the impossibility of knowing anything of William Shakespeare, I must say that I think one rises from a study of his life and work with something like a sense of personal acquaintance with the man. One feels at least as old Ben Jonson said, that he was honest and of an open and free nature, a man to know.

One other question there is, which on this day[1] we cannot forbear to ask. Was Shakespeare a religious man? We get no answer from the recorded facts of his life. The tradition that he disliked the Puritans, based mostly on a misinterpretation of some one or two pages in *Twelfth Night* and *All's Well,* and the tradition that he died a Roman Catholic, first heard of a hundred years after his death in the talk of a gossipy clergyman, are both valueless. I think the answer to the question must depend on the meaning we give to the question itself. If religion be only, as Matthew Arnold once defined it, morality touched with emotion,—then we may perhaps venture to call Shakespeare a religious man. He certainly recognized the nature and the imperative demands

[1] This paper was first delivered as an address in celebration of the tercentenary of Shakespeare's death. [L. B. G.]

of morality; he saw that the highest values in life are always moral values. We may be sure also that he was a reverent man. We shall find in his plays no flippant or contemptuous references to religious belief or practice, save on the lips of men who were themselves shallow or base. More than this, there is evidence enough in such plays as *Hamlet* that Shakespeare had pondered the meanings and the mystery of life. He could have been no stranger to those thoughts that are beyond the reaches of our souls. What solutions he ever reached for those deepest problems that vex the thinking soul, we do not know; it seems to me likely that he put them aside as insoluble, and in his later years sought quiet and content within the realm of positive knowledge. We may well be slow in pronouncing upon any man's religion; that is a matter between himself and his God. But we may not uncharitably say that in reading Shakespeare's pages we long for one thing, and for one thing only. With this all-embracing knowledge that seems to include almost the whole realm of human nature, could we but have a little faith. If the vision that saw so clearly and justly all the facts of human life could have had some faith in things unseen. Surely of such faith the saintly Cordelia, the noble Hermione, the gentle Desdemona, the Hamlet of Luther's Wittenberg might have known something. But among the very latest words of the great magician who created them all are these, which sound with a solemn pathos down the centuries,—

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

He was true to the facts of knowledge only. He showed the human soul as it is; he carried it through all the tangled web of circumstance, the struggles of good and evil, the joys and pains that make up this life of ours here, quite down to the moment when the fevered play is quite played out; "the rest is silence." We need one other book beside our Shakespeare; we need our Bible.

THE LITERATURE OF THE AGE OF QUEEN ANNE

I

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AGE

THE group of men of letters whose life and work form for us the center of interest during the period from 1700 to 1750 were all at work, and most of them were doing their best work, during the reign of Anne (1702–1714); but all of them outlived her. Addison was first to go, in 1719; after him, in the next twenty-five years, Prior, Steele, Defoe, Gay, Pope, the great Dean Swift in 1745, and, last of all, Bolingbroke, in 1751. The lifetime of this generation of men really decides the limits of the period.

It may be admitted, at the outset, that this age of Queen Anne is not one of the inspiring ages of history. It was not an age of faith, of heroism, or of imagination. Moralists, reformers, poets have little good to say of it. That "withered, unbelieving, second-hand eighteenth century," says Carlyle after his sweeping fashion. And it is true that this age, if looked at from the outside after the fashion of the picturesque historian, presents some unhandsome features. If it was not flagrantly immoral, irreligious, it was very worldly and without lofty ideals. The Elizabethan enthusiasm, the Puritan zeal had passed; the new philanthropic and reforming zeal had not yet come. Our ancestors of the Queen Anne time, in fact, were suspicious of anything that looked like enthusiasm, as disturbing the balance of sense and reason, but their society and morals suffered sadly for lack of it. The rich were getting richer and the poor were getting poorer. The young lord in the country hunted and drank and bullied and swore, and voted for the Tories and shouted for Church and State,—you can see him in Fielding; the young lord in town diced and drank at White's,

and lounged in the coffee-houses, showed his person and his toilet at the play, fought a duel now and then in Leicester Fields, and voted for the Whigs and shouted for Marlborough and the Protestant Succession,—you may see him in the *Tatler* and *Spectator,* a good many of him.

Gaming was high. My Lady Cowper says, in 1715, that no one thinks of setting down less than £200 at White's. The stage, though a little better than in the days of Charles II, was yet bad enough. I think a modern audience would hardly sit out one of Mr. Congreve's rattling comedies. Old Parson Adams in the novel wasn't far wrong when he averred that the only play of his day fit for a Christian to see was Mr. Steele's *Conscious Lovers,* though that, to be sure, was as good as a sermon.

Englishmen were getting to drink deep, too. What an enormous amount there is swallowed in one of Fielding's novels, for instance. Temperance didn't always accompany the other virtues. Our friend Dick Steele was too often in his cups, and grave Mr. Addison has been known to keep him company. My Lord Oxford vexed Queen Anne by coming into her presence tipsy rather too often, and you might have seen Mr. Secretary St. John of a morning with a wet handkerchief around his head trying to cool his brain from last night's drinking before he began the day's correspondence. The lower classes, especially, with the increase of poverty in town were becoming more and more addicted to this degrading vice. Early in the century the baleful habit of gin-drinking, unknown in England before, spread like a blight over London. "Retailers," says Lecky, "hung out painted boards announcing that their customers could be made drunk for a penny, dead drunk for two-pence, and should have straw for nothing." And after all it is perhaps the prevailing low tone of moral feeling, the absence of any quick sensibility in moral matters, that depresses you most as you look at the surface of this society. Fielding is not immoral at heart. But look, for instance, into some of those books that seriously profess to be written in the interest of morality,—say Richardson's novels,

which one admiring prelate pronounced better than any other book in the world except the Bible. It is not so much that they are bad, as that they do not know what goodness is; they have no high ideals. Richardson's famous novel is entitled *Pamela,* or *Virtue Rewarded;* what, pray, is the reward of virtue? Why simply that the abominable rake of a young squireen who has been pursuing Pamela through three volumes at last turns about and offers to marry her; she falls into his arms at once, and at this edifying conclusion we are expected to be melted into sympathy and admiration for the triumph of goodness. Even that most charming parson in a tie-wig, Mr. Addison, seems to me to preach sometimes a rather low and prudential kind of virtue. I am sure it is not the stuff out of which greatness is made.

As for religion at this time, everybody knows that it seemed to be pretty much worn out of men; its vigor, its hold upon conscience almost entirely gone. It had been made a matter of politics; party feeling gathered about it; its solemn observances had been made the formal tests of qualification for civil office. My Lord Bolingbroke went from White's gaming table, or some worse place in Drury Lane, to St. Paul's in order to take the sacrament, and came home to write an essay against revealed religion. The Deists who attacked Christianity and the Churchmen who defended it had both been so anxious to prove it rational that they hadn't left much of anything supernatural in it; and plain men were coming to think it not worth while to trouble themselves much about it. The lifelong endeavors of such men as good Bishop Butler and good Bishop Berkeley and the despairing cynicism of such men as the great Dean Swift alike indicate that there was little religion left in England. "It is come," says Butler, "I know not how, to be taken for granted by many persons that Christianity is not so much as a subject for inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious." "I suppose it will be granted," says Swift, "that hardly one in a hundred among our people of quality or gentry appears to act by any principle of religion, while great numbers of them entirely discard it."

The influence of the clergy upon character would seem to have been very small. In the country many of the better class were like Sir Roger de Coverley's chaplain, who read one of South's or Barrow's sermons for the good knight of a Sunday, and served as a kind of confidential valet for the rest of the week; while the other, and worse kind of a chaplain, whom one sees rather too frequently in the literature of the time, played cards with my lady of an evening when she had no other company, rode at the tail of a hunt sometimes, married my lady's maid,—if he didn't do worse,—sat at the second table, and helped my lord to bed at night when he was unable to get there alone.

Doubtless it would be possible, in this way, to sketch in a picture of the age that would be dark enough, and to cite only facts for our somber coloring. Yet I do not think that in the deepest sense such a picture would be true. The great mass of English people are, and always have been, thoughtful, serious, resolutely, yes, obstinately, bent on right things. So they were in the age of Queen Anne. And such a picture, whether true or false, would, for the most part, be beside our purpose as students of the literature of the age. Not that, as students of literature we are indifferent to the condition of society, manners, morals, religion; for literature is the expression of the life of an age, and the student of literature is interested in all that makes up that life. It becomes us, however, to ask not what are the striking, external aspects of the life of an age, but rather what were the ruling characteristics and tendencies of its thought, what was its intellectual and spiritual temper, that decided the general direction of all its activities, and got permanently embodied in letters.

Now broad generalizations about the temper of an age are not always very safe; but here surely one risks nothing in saying that even a slight examination of the Queen Anne time, shows what a fuller examination will confirm, that in all matters where the intellect was at all concerned, the ruling characteristic of the age was a critical and reasoning temper. There was a universal tendency to exalt the logical

faculties at the expense of the imagination and the emotions. There was a universal distrust of any action that couldn't justify itself before the cool judgment, a universal passion for clearness and plausibility, for coolness and sanity of temper. The very word "enthusiasm," you know, was never used except in a bad sense. The age prided itself not on its great achievements, on its heroic efforts, its high imagination, but on its good sense and good breeding. Wit and sense are its cardinal virtues; you remember how the changes are rung on them in Pope's verse. "I have a great respect for Paul," said Anthony Collins, "he was a man of sense and a gentleman." With an amusing self-complacency the men of that day looked back upon the great age of Elizabeth as a stormy, half-barbaric time of fanatic religion and shocking manners which they had fortunately outgrown. Very odd it sounds now to hear the youthful Addison say of Edmund Spenser:

> Old Spenser, next, warm'd with poetic rage,
> In ancient tales amus'd a barbarous age;
> An age that yet uncultivate and rude,
> Where'er the poet's fancy led, pursu'd
> . . . . . .
> But now the mystic tale, that pleased of yore,
> Can charm an understanding age no more;
> The long-spun allegories fulsome grow,
> While the dull moral lies too plain below.

This temper was, in part, I suppose, a natural reaction from that of the preceding century and the last part of the sixteenth century. It seems sometimes to be almost a law of human progress that the advance of thought shall not be constant but intermittent. So an age of enthusiasm, of faith, of adventurous temper is very likely to succeed a longer period during which mental activity is chiefly directed to the criticism of accepted opinions. The national temper cools down; the acquisitions of the one period are subjected to the sifting scrutiny of the next. So it was here. In the twenty-five years that preceded the reign of Anne the whole temper of the people was largely changed. They were sick

of controversy over theoretic matters. They were tired of the enthusiasms that produced such controversy. A reasoned moderation in all things seemed to them the one thing desirable. We hear a great deal about the reaction in morals that followed the restoration of Charles II in 1660. But I think that reaction is exaggerated. The morality of the court was bad enough, doubtless; as to Charles himself and the little group of profligate courtiers who had brought back to England the vices and not the graces of France, the less that one says about their morals, the better, as any one who has turned over the pages of Pepys' *Diary* knows. But the contamination didn't extend far beyond the limits of the court. The great mass of the English people were untouched by it; the heart of the nation, Puritan and Cavalier alike, was sound, and the domestic virtues yet bloomed fair. But while there wasn't any general reaction against Puritan morality, there was a general reaction against anything like enthusiasm, irregularity, anything that seemed to savor of fanaticism. Men were tired of it. They were not disposed to lofty emotions or to lofty doctrines. Such emotions and such doctrines only seemed to set men at loggerheads. Let us have no more of them, they said. We have had enough of New Lights and New Models; now let us follow our reason like men of sense. Let us give our attention to practical matters and leave to one side vagaries of imagination or conjecture.

Not that the age was indisposed to inquiry and discussion. Quite the contrary; there was a universal itch for discussion. Politics, philosophy, religion descended into the street. Every question that was thought of interest at all was debated at the club, in the coffee-house, in the drawing-room. There was, of course, often a certain thinness in much of this thinking, and the line of argument and tone of discussion were usually such as befitted those places,—clear, plausible, and desultory, rather than profound, serious, or systematic. In Bishop Berkeley's charming *Alciphron* Lysicles, the young free thinker, is made to say, "I will undertake a lad of fourteen, bred in the modern way, shall make

a better figure and be more considered in any drawing-room or any assembly of polite people, than one at four-and-twenty who hath lain by a long time at school or college. He shall say better things in a better manner, and be more liked by good judges. Where doth he pick up this improvement? Where our grave ancestors would never have looked for it —in a drawing-room, a coffee-house, a chocolate-house, at the tavern, or groom-porter's. In these and the like fashionable places of resort, it is the custom for polite people to speak freely on all subjects, religious, moral, or political. So that the young gentleman who frequents them is in the way of hearing many instructive lectures, seasoned with wit and raillery, and uttered with spirit." It is odd to read in the Memoirs of the Countess of Huntington that "My Lord Bolingbroke was seldom in her ladyship's company without discussing some topic beneficial to his eternal interest."

Now this distrust of enthusiasm or emotion, this demand for clearness and sense, this easy, almost jaunty confidence in the cool logical faculty,—you may see them all at their height, I should say, during the Queen Anne period. And you may see them in all forms of thought. In politics, for example. The old high traditional notions of government had been pretty much overturned by the Revolution of the previous century. Men in one of the parties kept on talking about the divine right of kings; but nobody believed in it; they didn't believe it themselves. Said Swift,—and that, too, after he had turned Tory,—

> I confess it is hard to conceive how any law which the supreme power makes may not by the same supreme power be repealed; so that I shall not determine whether the Queen's right be indefeasible or not.

It was plain enough in spite of all sophisms, that the monarch who had preceded Anne had been King of England by Act of Parliament,—nothing more or less; if there were any such thing as a divine, indefeasible right of hereditary succession to the throne of England, why then the crown belonged not on the head of Anne, but on the handsome

curls of the Chevalier George, who was fighting Marlborough over the water. But this didn't diminish the loyalty of Englishmen to Anne. The truth is, the divinity that doth hedge a king was unknown in England after 1688. The whole question of the nature of the monarchy and the relation of the different parts of the government to each other had been brought into popular, argumentative discussion. Englishmen wanted a wise and reasonable rule; for the abstract principle underlying it, they didn't care.

In theology and philosophy it would be easy to show similar tendencies. The whole effort of the deistic movement was to divest religion of all that was mysterious in doctrine or extravagant in profession, and bring it down to the easy apprehension of the coffee-house and the drawing-room. Before all things it must be made to seem reasonable and prudent. Here as in government, the test is a wise expediency. Pope says, you remember, not only

> For forms of government let fools contest;
> Whate'er is best administered is best,

but also

> For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;
> His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right.

All parties were content to assume the supremacy and sufficiency of the logical reason. It's best to believe in a God, said the Deists, because really it is difficult to talk on many matters reasonably or elegantly without assuming one as a first premise; it's safer to believe in a God, argued the timid orthodoxy of the day, because at all events there may be one, and he will damn you, if you don't.

In practical religious life, likewise, it is curious to notice the same ambition for a reasoned moderation, for philosophical regulation of life, for conduct that couldn't be charged with folly. It is said by Mr. Hunt in his *History of Religious Thought* to be an actual fact that the two texts on which most sermons were preached in England during the first half of the eighteenth century were, "Let your moderation be known unto all men," and "Be not righteous over-

much." But these were not exactly the texts on which Wesley and Whitefield began to preach, a little later.

Now when you turn to the arts you see still more clearly the operation of the same thing. The same critical, cool, reasoning temper demanded in art order, grace, regularity, propriety. It insisted upon adherence to the probabilities of life; upon reasonable obedience to rules and models; it was shocked by irregularities of form, by too wide a departure from convention. In music the absurd unrealities of the new romantic opera were a source of endless criticism. You remember those charming papers of the *Spectator* in which Mr. Addison makes delicious fun of Signor Nicolini and his new Italian opera of *Hydaspes:* the sparrows who belonged in the orange grove, but would fly into the lady's chamber; the painted griffins who had become so expert in spitting fire, and the stage lion who, being a candle-snuffer by trade, had a bad trick of standing on his hinder paws all the time, and having unfortunately proved too much for the hero once or twice in the mortal combat, had to be superseded by a country gentleman who plays the lion for diversion, but desires his name should be concealed. "Audiences," says Mr. Addison, "have often been reproached by writers for the coarseness of their taste; but our present grievance does not seem to be the want of a good taste, but common sense."

On the tragic stage it was only with some difficulty that the audience of those days could endure the irregularities and license of such a Gothic writer as Shakespeare. And indeed they must have seemed strange when Betterton acted Macbeth in a tie-wig and knee-buckles, and Mrs. Bracegirdle received the raptures of Romeo in a hoop of twelve yards' circumference. On the other hand, Mr. Addison's famous tragedy of *Cato,* most unimpeachably correct and insufferably priggish of all plays, was accounted the highest reach of dramatic art, the crown of its author's fame.

The one form of dramatic composition in which the age would seem likely to move freely and with success was the comedy of manners, in which the wit, the address, the

humors of contemporary life are reproduced upon the stage, and in fact for a little time this was true. There is nothing more brilliant in English comedy than some of Congreve's work; but Congreve and his contemporaries ruined their drama by their salacious contempt for common morality; and there is no better proof of the moral health of English taste than the fact that this school of comedy which, measured merely by intellectual brilliancy, promised so fair at the beginning of Anne's reign, sank into entire extinction within thirty years.

In no one of the arts does this passion for order and method appear more clearly or more instinctively than in architecture. It is curious to notice the violent dislike Englishmen of the age entertained for Gothic architecture. The word "Gothic" itself began then to be used, not as applicable especially to architecture, but as a general adjective of reproach which signified about the same as barbarous or mediæval. The taste of the age was pleased with lightness, simplicity, proportion, broad curves, economy of line. A great Gothic cathedral seemed dark, vast, complicated; its details were intricate and perplexing; it was covered without and filled within with an unmeaning profusion of ornament. Addison's architectural comments are often curious and suggestive. His papers on Westminster Abbey are, indeed, among the most beautiful specimens of his writing; it is evident, however, that it is not the architectural impressiveness of the building that moves him, but the grand historical and religious associations of the abbey, and its solemn mementos of our common mortality. His admiration for the great St. Paul's that Christopher Wren had just finished was unbounded. Some of you will remember his papers on architecture in the *Spectator*. The Pantheon at Rome is certainly a very noble building, but modern ideas get a shock on seeing it put into comparison thus: "Let any one reflect on the disposition of mind he finds in himself at his first entrance into the Pantheon at Rome, and how his imagination is filled with something great and amazing; and at the same time consider how little in proportion he is

affected with the inside of a Gothic cathedral, though it be five times larger than the other; which can arise from nothing else but the greatness of manner in the one and the meanness of manner in the other."

In the account of his early travels Mr. Addison has a great deal to say of Venice, but not a single word, I believe, for St. Mark's; while the great Cathedral of Siena only suggests the remark that, "When a man sees the prodigious pains and expense our forefathers have been at in these barbarous buildings, one can not but fancy to himself what miracles of architecture they would have left us had they been only instructed in the right way."

Now these characteristics in the taste and temper of the age, which, as I have been trying to suggest in this rapid and sketchy way, are to be seen in all forms of thought, decided of course the character of its polite literature.

This passion for reasonableness, for moderation, for good sense, for grace of form; this dislike of extravagance, of whatever seemed rude, or irregular, or uncultivated, all this is seen of course in letters better than anywhere else. You may see the attractiveness of the new civilization for the men of the time; their vast esteem for refinement, for the arts and graces of society. They wanted to get as far away as possible from the great ages of fanaticism and bad taste. Good breeding must express itself in letters. Society begins to talk in print; and it talks very charmingly. There is moderation and urbanity in what it says. If a man has anything to say, thought the Queen Anne men, let him say it so that well-bred men of wit and sense shall care to listen. A man certainly ought to be able to write as well as he can talk; and no man of breeding thinks of running into extravagance, long-winded rhetoric, or rhodomontade in his talk. Now the result of such a temper as this is that for the first time we have a good, serviceable, every-day prose style in English,—clear, flexible, racy, idiomatic, and not too far removed from the easy grace of conversation. It was an immense gain. Contrast the prose of the Queen Anne men with the prose that was written by the men of fifty years

earlier, say by Milton, Sir Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor; it is like a new speech. The prose of Swift or Addison is modern prose,—graceful, if it be Addison's, forceful if it be Swift's,—but in either case easy, simple in structure, self-possessed, with the varied but natural modulation of good conversation between man and man. And in spite of the occasional protest and example of such writers as De Quincey and Ruskin, who would carry prose into the province of oratory or poetry, I think it will be generally admitted that, as far as form goes, the prose of these Queen Anne men leaves little to be desired. To be sure, we get early specimens of this kind of prose before the close of the seventeenth century, in the work of Locke and Dryden; but it was not until the time that we are considering that it can be said to have been popularized. During this Queen Anne time, it is remarkable how many men wrote well; how generally diffused was the habit of clear and effective, graceful expression.

Doubtless there is in much of this writing a certain thinness, a glib assurance rather than any breadth of view or richness of suggestion. It may be plausibly urged sometimes that these men write so easily because they have so little to say. Yet to say little with clearness and charm is perhaps better than to say more with repellent obscurity of manner. The pamphleteer, the essayist of Queen Anne's time, had learned the rare art of making the most efficient use of his material. And before we ascribe the clearness of this Queen Anne prose to its shallowness, we must remember that the one man who was perhaps the most consummate master of English in his generation was no coffee-house wit, but the profoundest English philosopher of his century. No man has ever yet succeeded better in conveying profoundest meaning in most lucid graceful prose than Bishop Berkeley.

With poetry, to be sure, the case was different. If you insist on an elevated imagination and a warmth of feeling as requisites of poetry, you will hardly find any poetry in the Queen Anne time. It has been the fashion sometimes, indeed, to deny that Mr. Pope's famous verses are poetry at

all. But that depends upon how you define poetry. Certainly they are a very different kind of poetry from that which Milton, or Shakespeare, or Burns, or Shelley wrote. And yet little Mr. Pope is as sure of his niche in our temple of fame as any of them. Indeed, if success consists in attaining completely what one aims at, in satisfying one's ideal, then I am not sure but Pope was the most successful of writers. Standards change. We value a poem now for its power to stir the emotions and to enlarge or uplift the imagination. In our definition of poetry we adopt Coleridge's antithesis between poetry and science, and fix the essential characteristics of poetry not in its form but in its subject and spirit. We have so given ourselves over to the romantic school that the very phrase "a didactic poem" sounds to us like a contradiction in terms. We insist that the poet should find his subject in the realm of emotion or passion and should see it through the imagination, not through the cool, dry light of the intellect. But a poem in Queen Anne's time was first of all a work of art. It differed from other writing not primarily in subject but in form. Grace of manner, skill, perfection of workmanship, conformity to recognized canons of taste, these were what the coffee-house critics of 1710 admired. The excellencies of this poetry, you see, are those which the intellect without the emotions is fitted to understand and appreciate. Neatness, point, epigrammatic brevity, careful balance of parts, skill in the turning of a phrase, wit in the narrow, modern sense, and in the broader sense in which Pope used the word,—good and quick judgment,—these are the ideals aimed at. Poetry is a kind of perfected rhythmic conversation, with the wit, innuendo, allusion of the best conversation,—all elevated a little, pruned of irrelevant matter, and confined in regular verse. That is Pope's poetry, and Prior's. One may not call it poetry, and one may greatly prefer his Shelley or his Browning; but to have no relish of it would seem to argue some deficiency of appreciation. It has finish, the flavor of culture, the aroma of good society about it. Man isn't a hero and an adventurer; he belongs in drawing-rooms, and this, said our an-

cestors, is the well-bred poetry he ought to read. See it sparkle!

However widely our tastes may differ about this Queen Anne literature, I believe we must all grant to it the virtues it professed. It was clear and sane. The opinions of these men were often shallow and often narrow; but they knew what they meant themselves and they could tell you. And really it is worth while to cultivate that virtue. I was reading the other day Mr. Swinburne on Mr. Rossetti's poetry; and this is what Mr. Swinburne said of it:

> It has the fullest fervour and fluency of impulse, and the impulse is always towards harmony and perfection. It has the inimitable note of instinct, and the instinct is always high and right. It carries weight enough to overbear the style of a weaker man, but no weight of thought can break it, no subtlety of emotion attenuate, no ardor of passion deface. It can breathe unvexed in the finest air and pass unsinged through the keenest fire. It has all the grace of perfect force and all the force of perfect grace. It is sinuous as water or as light, flexible and penetrative, delicate and rapid; it works on its way without halt or jar or collapse.

What do you suppose Dick Steele or Joseph Addison or even that much maligned Queen Anne critic, John Dennis, would have said to such a rhapsody of words as that? Some of Mr. Addison's criticism,—on the *Paradise Lost,* for instance,—is certainly rather wooden, but it has the very great advantage over all such criticism as this, that it does mean something, and we readers of average intelligence may know precisely what it means.

And for the poetry of the period we can claim a similar excellence. For my own part, I should certainly prefer the poetry of the early nineteenth century to the poetry of the early eighteenth century; and yet, in these days when so much stress is laid upon the picturesque, the suggestive, or even the mere musical functions of poetry, when Mr. Addington Symonds thinks Shelley has realized the miracle of "making words altogether detached from any meaning the substance of a new, ethereal music," I say it is not altogether unpleasant to take up this old-fashioned verse whose

first charm is clear and pithy meaning. And the matter of which this poetry is made up, if it be neither novel nor moving, has at least that first mark of classic literature, universality. The stuff of most of Pope's poetry, for instance, is nothing but a selection from the phenomena and the laws of society and of morals. Such material is familiar enough, certainly; all truths of conduct are familiar; but it is of perennial interest. The poets of that age could not clothe their material in imagery, for as I have been saying, it was characteristic of the age not to think in images, but to think in propositions; yet it is no mean art that can give to a great body of truths, social and moral, a final poetic form, clear, pointed, and vigorous.

Such then was the general temper of the age of Anne as it found expression in politics and theology, in art and letters. But upon literature there were certain other causes operating which tended to the same results. One was the influence of France. The civilization of France during the seventeenth century, though hardly touching the mass of the people, was more brilliant than that of any other country of Europe. The literature of France, indeed, during the period of the Renaissance was not so original, vigorous, and imaginative as that of England during the same time. France hardly had a Shakespeare or a Milton. But the literary art had been carried to a higher perfection, perhaps, in France than in England. The influence of the great Greek and Latin classics, when they were first popularly known in the sixteenth century, seemed to be quite different in England and in France. In England they stimulated imagination and curiosity; their history and legend filtered down through translations into the active minds of many men who like Shakespeare had small Latin and less Greek, and thus they co-operated with other causes and helped to set English literature upon a course of independent development. But in France they served rather as models to be admired and imitated. The result was the more rapid growth in France of a spirit of literary criticism and greater attention to literary form. In Queen Anne's time the French

had attained for half a century and more that elegance and correctness which the English were aiming at. And the French, it goes without saying, seemed by nature to excel in just that clearness and point which the English at the time of Queen Anne most admired. It is hard to measure any such influence as this, and I think it has often been exaggerated; but in the early years of the eighteenth century unquestionably it was very great. French was the language of diplomacy, of learning, of society, of fashion, of travel; every cultivated Englishman read it. The influence upon English literary manner was inevitable; and it flowed not so much from any one author, as from the general spirit and manner of French thought and speech. As Pope says,—

> We conquer'd France, but felt our captive's charms;
> Her arts victorious triumph'd o'er our arms;
> Britain to soft refinements less a foe,
> Wit grew polite, and numbers learn'd to flow.

Literature was also affected, of course, by the peculiar constitution of society at the time. Now the most important social fact in England at the beginning of the eighteenth century was the growth of a great middle commercial class, who were rapidly growing wealthy by trade. Getting much of the wealth of the country into their hands, they were getting also that influence which wealth gives. They owned the greater part of the national debt which England had been piling up for twenty years. Their money was fighting England's battles. They were shrewd, quick-witted, with a good knowledge of men and things; and it was clear that they were likely to hold the balance of political power in England. Neither party could afford to overlook them. How to reach them, was the question. There were three hundred thousand of them within five miles of the Parliament Houses; but to report a word of what was said there was a crime, and the eloquence of Bolingbroke and Wyndham was never heard outside the walls of St. Stephen's. Nothing was left but to write for them. It was for them that the pamphlet was invented. It was for them that Defoe and

Steele and Swift wrote, and wrote their best. Indeed, all three really belonged to that class themselves. I doubt whether the political influence of the press was ever so great as it was for a little time during the reign of Anne. The pen of Swift was literally mightier than the sword of Marlborough. It was the natural result that men of letters should all be drawn into political life. With the single exception of Pope, every writer of any eminence during the reign of Anne—Defoe, Addison, Swift, Steele, Prior, Bolingbroke, Gay, Parnell, Arbuthnot, and all the rest—held some office, or was in some way actively connected with public life. This fact, too, of course, co-operated with the other causes I have mentioned to give to the literature of the age its clear and practical character. Such men would of necessity write like men of affairs who are addressing the people.

But this great middle class needed to be entertained, too. It was largely for them that the Tatlers and the Spectators were written. It was coming to be an inquisitive reading class. It wanted to know about itself and about its betters. It had some relish of the best things in letters and art. Now, for the first time, the writer could depend on having a public. Remember, there was no book-buying public in England until about 1700. Then for the first time sprang up the race of booksellers. Everybody who has read Dryden remembers old Jacob Tonson, with his two left legs, his "leering looks, bull-face, and Judas-colored hair."

The booksellers, Curll and Lintot, you know, play almost as conspicuous a part in the story of Pope's life as Pope himself. But booksellers mean book-buyers, an audience who will listen to the writer and pay him. Before 1700, if any writer made a living by his pen,—and very few did,—he must write for the stage, or he must depend upon the bounty of some wealthy patron. Shakespeare would seem to have got together a snug fortune by the proceeds of his theatrical property and by shrewd investments in real estate; but doesn't every school boy remember that Milton and his family received for the copyright of *Paradise Lost*, all told, £18 or $90? Dryden set his genius out to hire

for years by writing two plays a year—and mighty poor plays some of them were, as Pepys would say—to get bread and butter; and almost every one of his admirable prose dedications was aimed at the pocketbook of some noble patron. But by the time of Anne an author might write for the public and find a publisher to pay him for it. Eighty thousand copies of Defoe's pamphlet, *The True Born Englishman,* were sold on the streets of London. The daily circulation of the *Spectator* was about 4,000 copies, sometimes reaching as high as 13,000, and when the numbers were collected into volumes, more than 10,000 copies of each successive volume were immediately sold. Swift's most popular pamphlet ran through four editions in a week, and above 100,000 copies of *Gulliver's Travels* were sold in five years. When Lintot printed Pope's *Iliad* he issued a handsome subscription edition of 650 copies for the aristocracy, but he printed a cheap little duodecimo edition for the people, and he sold 7,500 copies of that within a few weeks. You couldn't sell so many copies of a new translation of Homer now.

This popularity meant fame, you see; it was worth writing for. Sometimes it meant money too. The first fortune made by any English writer solely by the sale of his works, I suppose, was that made by Mr. Pope from his translation of Homer. That work brought him the pretty sum of £9,000—and money was then worth many times what it is now—which he, as we all remember, put into that charming little villa of Twickenham, with its lawn and grotto, and shellwork, and all sorts of stiff eighteenth century bric-a-brac.

Another thing that decided the character of the Queen Anne literature was the immense growth of London relatively to the rest of England. So far as literature is concerned, England from 1700 to 1740 practically meant London. In Queen Anne's time one-tenth the population of England and Wales lived within four miles of St. Paul's. The population of London is one-sixth that of England and Wales to-day; but there are now more large towns outside of

London than there were then, and the means of communication are so many and so rapid that what is said or printed in London in the morning goes all around the world before noon. Indeed, the growth of other literary centers, the increase in the means of spreading intelligence, and the change in English literary taste deprived London of its exclusive claim to a literary preëminence before the close of the century; but in Queen Anne's day the great mass of the active, intelligent, curious public were crowded into the metropolis. And I suppose the London population was more homogeneous then than it is now. Extremes were not so far apart. I should think it probable that the average intelligence of London was higher, and the proportion of readers to its whole population greater, during the first third of the eighteenth century than it ever has been since. Now when a large portion of the reading public, and that the most intelligent portion, is thus gathered immediately around the center of government and society, you have the most favorable conditions for the growth of a literature which shall deal in brief, rapid, effective fashion with the passing events of the day. The pamphlet of Defoe or Swift or the Spectator of Addison would be five days old before it could reach Chester or York; but it could be laid damp from the press on five hundred coffee-house tables in London and be read before night by fifty thousand people. In these circumstances literature inevitably became, as never before or since, a town literature.

No other period of our literary history has linked itself by so many associations to the actual town or left so many memories of itself in almost every street. As one walks through that great, murky Babel of a London to-day with his head full of Mr. Gay's *Trivia,* or Mr. Addison's *Spectator,* or Dr. Swift's *Journal,* the imagination will easily paint for him that dim-lighted London of Queen Anne's day, its picturesque old street fronts, its hurrying crowd with knee-breeches and wigs and swords, its shouting chairmen that jostle you from the walk as they hurry on with my lady in her sedan to the masque or the play, her two link boys with lighted torches in advance, her two stout footmen with

oaken cudgels tramping on by her chair windows; the blast of the horn and the creak and rattle as the Cambridge coach comes rolling down the Strand driving everything before it, and reining up its smoking team at Locket's in Charing Cross, while its passengers, mightily glad to have escaped Captain Macheath on Horseley Down, unpack themselves, and the trim barmaid in white apron meets them at open door with smiling face. Somehow this Queen Anne London always seems more real to me than Queen Victoria's. The great dome of Paul's, a little more delightful, mellowed, and smoked than when it was new and staring white in Addison's days, is Queen Anne's church, and Addison's, and Sacheverell's, and Swift's,—doesn't old Queen Anne stand ever before it on a statue whose limp and stupid look is admirable? The Great Holborn Viaduct is thrown across the descent of Snow Hill now, but you can go down under it if you choose and walk up that gentle slope down which the Mohocks rolled the women they had headed up in barrels for this polite diversion. As you pass out of the broad square of Covent Garden, on the east side, under Inigo Jones' piazza, you will not forget that house just in front of you at the corner of Bow and Russell Streets. It's now a grocer's shop; but in at that door and up that stair passed the wit and fashion of Queen Anne's time, for that was Will's Coffee-house, where you might see

> Priests sipping coffee,
> Sparks and poets, tea.

Here in the corner by the fire stood great Dryden's chair, and here—if we may still believe the old tradition—came to see the great Dryden the youthful Pope,

> As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,
> [He] lisped in numbers, for the numbers came.

Will's was the center of wit and letters until they migrated across the street to Button's, at 27 Russell Street. It's a

fruit vendor's shop now; but it will always be to us the coffee-house where the great Mr. Addison held his court.

You walk westward through the Strand and Pall Mall, and stand in front of the castellated gate of old St. James', and here perhaps rather than anywhere else do you feel yourself in Queen Anne's London. Inside these respectable and dingy walls she lived and she died. The house next door, in front of which stand always now a couple of red-coated sentries, is the town house of the Prince of Wales to-day, but it will always keep its old name of Marlborough House, and you will always remember that Queen Anne built it for her friend and crony, her Mrs. Freeman, the Duchess of Marlborough. When the two old ladies, one of whom had a very hot temper and the other a very sulky one, afterwards quarreled, as such persons usually do, the Queen would have been glad to get her house back again and the pretty corner of park on which she had built it; but she couldn't, and the great Duchess Sarah lived here, and died here at last, in spite of her plucky retort when they told her that only a blister could save her,—"I won't be blistered, and I won't die, either!"

Stand with your back to St. James, and look up the street. At your right was the St. James Coffee-house, headquarters of all the Whig Party, just opposite the Cocoa Tree, headquarters of all the Tories. In this street lived Addison. Parnell was in the lane leading off to the left. In Bury Street, first turn to the right, Swift had his first floor dining-room and bedchamber, at eight shillings a week,—"and plaguy dear 'tis," he says. The Queen Anne men and memories are all about us.

But to think of the Queen Anne London makes one over-garrulous; let me keep to my theme!

Such reminiscences may remind us of the last characteristic of this Queen Anne literature that I will name to-day. It is eminently a personal literature. It is true, indeed, that all literary work of any value is, in an important sense, an expression of the personality of its author. It is precisely the prerogative of the man of original genius to

pass truth and emotions through his own character and issue them with the stamp of his own individuality. Hence, in my judgment, all fruitful literary criticism must take into account the personal character and surroundings of those authors whose work it would explain or estimate. But at no other period is this personal element in our literature so high as in the Queen Anne time. The literature of the time is a disclosure of the daily life of its writers. We see them in their habit as they lived, at the club, in the coffee-house, in the street, in the drawing-room. It was this common, daily, rather mundane life in which they were most interested and of which they wrote. They keep back nothing. We are shown their follies, their vices, their charities. We come to have a real acquaintance with them. Don't you know Dick Steele and the eminently worthy and decorous Mr. Joseph Addison as well as you know your neighbor? Haven't we heard nervous, wiry little Mr. Pope recite his famous verses about Miss Fermor's hair? And it seems only the other day that we caught a glimpse of the great Dr. Swift as his chairman set down the beetle-browed Doctor in his gown and bands at my Lord Treasurer's door. And herein resides a great part of the charm which most readers find in the study of this period. Here is a little group of writers, all living within a mile of each other in town; all interested in the same things; with one exception—Defoe—all personally acquainted with each other; and they take us into their confidence; after a little they come to have an interest for us largely independent of the purely literary value of their books. We care more for the men, indeed, than we care for their books; or rather, we care for their books chiefly because they introduce us so delightfully to the men. And to know the Queen Anne literature it is first necessary to get on familiar terms with the Queen Anne men.

Such, so far as I have been able to sketch them in this rapid way, I conceive to have been the chief characteristics of the age of Anne, and of the literature it produced: a practical, reasoning, mundane temper; a deficiency of emo-

tion and of imagination; a distrust of enthusiasm and all ill-regulated action, and a corresponding confidence in sense and judgment; a remarkable interest in all political and social matters. As a result, a clear and idiomatic prose concerning itself mostly with matters of immediate daily interest; a poetry finished, pointed, urbane; and everywhere a disposition to regulate life in accordance with reasoned standards, and to give to it the moderation and grace of good society.

This general temper, of course, changed very rapidly after the middle of the century; indeed, we may see in the closing years of the Queen Anne period some indications of that reaction which at the close of the century culminated in a revolution in all departments of thought. Let me note, in a single word, one or two of these marks of reaction.

One is a reaction from the hard and practical sense of the age to sentimentalism; an affectation of sentiment and emotion to take the place of the real; and this in different kinds of literature and in varied ways. It may be seen, for instance, in Young's poetry, where, without a ripple of real emotion, there is a constant tumid swell and roll of mere declamation, pompous reflections that are utterly dreary. The *Night Thoughts* is at once the hollowest and the most resonant of poems.

Contemporary with Young's work and Pope's latest writing was Hervey's *Meditations Among the Tombs;* it is now so entirely forgotten that Mr. Gosse in his *History of Eighteenth Century Literature* doesn't even deign to mention it; but it is said to have been the most popular book of the century, no less than seventeen editions having been issued in seventeen years. Any readers of this generation who have looked into it have probably been surprised to find it one of the most florid of books, full of sophomoric declamations of the very worst kind, and written in a tone of unctuous pathos very unedifying. In fiction a similar manner may be seen. Fielding represents the sturdy common sense of the age, but Richardson is morbidly sentimental, and

Richardson was the more popular. Sterne, a half generation later, is sentimentalism incarnate.

The other mark of reaction I note is a growing dislike for the stifling air and the prim conventionalities of city life. Now and then a man begins to look outside the town. Before the death of Pope one may already hear some first words of that new gospel of nature so soon to be preached by Rousseau. Indeed, even Dryden had some momentary moods of fanciful admiration for that ideal age of nature and freedom,

> When wild in woods the noble savage ran,

as his line has it. Pope had succeeded in writing the worst nature poetry in the world, and was only prevented by some merciful special providence from attempting what he called "Indian Pastorals."

And already as early as 1726 we can see through all the academic diction of Thomson some of the beginnings of the vision and sympathy which by the close of the century were to find full expression in the poetry of Cowper and Burns, and of that greatest of all poets of nature,—Wordsworth.

THE LITERATURE OF THE AGE OF QUEEN ANNE

II

POLITICS, PARTIES, AND PERSONS

One of Mr. Addison's pleasant gossiping papers in the *Spectator* begins thus:

About the middle of last winter I went to see an opera at the theatre in Hay Market, where I could not but take notice of two parties of very fine women, that had placed themselves in the opposite side boxes, and seemed drawn up in a kind of battle array one against another. After a short survey of them, I found they were patched differently; the faces on one hand being spotted on the right side of the forehead, and those upon the other on the left. I quickly perceived that they cast hostile glances upon one another; and that their patches were placed in those different situations, as party signals to distinguish friends from foes. In the middle boxes, between these two opposite bodies, were several ladies who patched indifferently on both sides of their faces, and seemed to sit there with no other intention but to see the opera. Upon inquiry I found, that the body of Amazons on my right hand were Whigs, and those on my left Tories: and that those who had placed themselves in the middle boxes were a neutral party, whose faces had not yet declared themselves. These last, however, as I afterwards found, diminished daily, and took their party with one side or the other; insomuch that I observed in several of them, the patches, which were before dispersed equally, are now all gone over to the Whig or Tory side of the face. The censorious say that the men, whose hearts are aimed at, are very often the occasions that one part of the face is thus dishonoured, and lies under a kind of disgrace, while the other is so much set off and adorned by the owner; and that the patches turn to the right or to the left, according to the principles of the man who is most in favour. But whatever may be the motives of a few fantastical coquettes, who do not patch for the public good so much as for their own private advantage, it is certain, that there are several women of honour, who patch out of principle, and with an eye to the interest of their country. Nay, I am informed that some of them adhere so steadfastly to their party, and are so far from sacrificing their zeal for the public to their passion for any particular

person, that in a late draught of marriage articles a lady has stipulated with her husband, that whatever his opinions are, she shall be at liberty to patch on which side she pleases.

In this account of an odd mixture of fashion and politics I suppose Mr. Addison's playful humor has not exaggerated the facts at all, for there is abundant evidence to show how thoroughly the society of Queen Anne's time interested itself in party politics, divided itself up in accordance with party sympathies, and how all literature, gossip, and even fashion were colored by party prejudice or preference. A large portion of the literature of the time is avowedly and exclusively political. It is concerned, moreover, with the details of party politics; very seldom does any of the political writing of the age, even the best of it, like Swift's, rise into the region of general principles. The writing of Swift never has the large wisdom of such a man as Burke; it is concerned rather with the immediate questions of the hour, with personal and partisan questions, and does not often bring to their solution the wider truths of economics or government. So, too, the personal careers of all these men depended intimately upon the changing fortunes of the parties to which they belonged. Defoe, Steele, Addison, Swift,—the position and the work of every one of these men depended, at some of the most decisive junctures of their lives, upon the ups and downs of party politics. It seems desirable, therefore, that, at the very outset of any study of these men and their writings, we should call freshly to mind the course of party politics during the reign of Anne, sketching rapidly the topics and the persons most prominent in the political movements of the time.

The writers of Queen Anne's time all range themselves as either Whigs or Tories. But when we ask ourselves, what were the differences between them, what were the questions they disputed so warmly, we find it not so easy to answer. We cannot discover any real question at issue between the two parties. Each goes on abusing the other, but one cannot exactly understand the charges. The truth is, I suppose, that there were really no clear principles at issue between the

two parties. The questions that once divided them had been pretty much settled by the logic of events; and yet the two parties lived on, divided by tradition, by differences upon matters of expediency, and by personal rivalries for place and power. It is very often so, you know, in political history. When a great political party has settled one issue, it doesn't die, but looks about for another; and between the settlement of the old issue and the discovery of a new one, there is usually an interval during which party lines are vaguely drawn, and you can hardly tell what principles are at stake.

But it is to be noted that this is just the time when partisan controversy is sure to be most active and rancorous. For being really pretty much agreed as to principles, the parties have to transfer the contest to persons, and personal controversy in politics as everywhere else is the most bitter of all controversies. Then, too, at a time when parties are not widely divided, persons can change sides, if it serve their own interest to do so, without much change of principle or doctrine; and such desertion always provokes bitter censure, censure all the more bitter because the desertion can be plausibly defended. Dean Swift, for instance, once said in his own paper, the *Examiner,* "Let any one examine a reasonable honest man of either side, upon those opinions in religion and government, which both parties daily buffet each other about, he shall hardly find one material point in difference between them." And yet Dean Swift himself was the most terrible of party writers, and by almost all the Whigs was cursed as a renegade for a change of party which he could readily and effectively defend.

But while there were no very clear questions of controversy between the Whigs and Tories of Queen Anne's time, it was still true that these two parties represented, as two great parties in a state almost always do, two attitudes of the human mind on public affairs; the conservative and the radical; one represents motion, the other check; one holds to that which is old, the other wants what is new; one represents authority, the other liberty. Both are necessary al-

ways, and it is in the due equilibrium of power between them that the safety of the State consists. The Tory party was the conservative party; the Whig, the progressive.

But to be more specific, the principal subjects on which parties had once actively differed, and still continued to differ in theory in Anne's time, were two. The first was the nature of the monarchy and its relation to the other parts of the government. The extreme Tories held that the King had a divine right to his throne, by virtue of his hereditary succession; and that this right was indefeasible, and implied the duty of unconditional obedience from the subject. The extreme Whigs held that the King was purely the creation of the people, and held his office by act of Parliament. But then it would have been difficult to find many such extreme Whigs as these, or many such extreme Tories; and between these extremes of opinion there was room for numberless grades of approximates, and most people didn't trouble themselves much about it. The second and much more important subject of difference was the relation of the Church to the State and to Dissent. The Tories were mostly Churchmen and held that the interest of the Church and religion demanded more constant and detailed attention from the State, and more stringent measures to repress dissent. They believed in a close and thorough union between Church and State, and said, not unreasonably, that this would be impossible if the offices of the State were given to those who were not members of the Church. They always called themselves by preference the Church party; Queen Anne never called them anything else. The Whigs, on the other hand, though many of them were good Churchmen, apprehended less danger from Dissent and were more liberal towards it. It was to the Whig party that all the Dissenters belonged.

There was another difference between these two parties, that was quite as important as any speculative difference of opinion, and that was growing more important every year. The most significant social fact of the time is the growth of a great middle commercial class who were coming to con-

trol the rapidly increasing trade of England, getting wealth fast, and filling up the towns. At the bottom of much political controversy between 1700 and 1750 was the undefined jealousy between this class and the landed class. It was trade against land; old aristocracy against new wealth; town against country. Now this commercial class almost to a man were Whigs; the landed gentry and their dependents, country squires and parsons to a man, were Tories. Sir Roger de Coverley, you know, is a good Tory; you remember his indignant outburst in Westminster Abbey when they showed him the effigy of an English king the head of which had been stolen—"Some Whig, I'll warrant you; you ought to lock up your Kings better, they'll carry off the body too, if you don't take care." And if you've read Mr. Addison's *Freeholder* you will recall the Tory foxhunter who rode into the country one day with Mr. Addison, pulled up at the inn of his own village, whistled out his landlord and introduced him to Mr. Addison as a very good man who was, to be sure, so busy he hadn't time to go to church, but had helped pull down two or three meeting-houses. A very happy shire it was, said the jolly foxhunter, in his account he gave of it while supper was a-getting,—scarce a Presbyterian in it.

> Supper was no sooner served in, than he took occasion from a shoulder of mutton that lay before us, to cry up the plenty of England, which would be the happiest country in the world, provided we would live within ourselves. Upon which he expatiated on the inconveniences of trade, that carried from us the commodities of our country, and made a parcel of upstarts as rich as men of the most ancient families of England.

Needless to say Mr. Addison was a Whig; he manages afterwards, you remember, to bring his foxhunter up to town and convert him.

What the attitude of these two parties toward each other was at the opening of the reign of Anne, and how they came into that attitude we may see by a moment's reference to some of the familiar facts of the preceding reigns. The two parties were really created (forty years

before Anne came to the throne) by the Act of Uniformity in 1662,—that act by which the possibility of uniting a vast majority of all Englishmen into one broad, liberal, national Church was lost forever. The Act of Uniformity, you remember, required of every minister an unqualified assent to the whole of the *Prayer Book,* and enforced it upon all public worship whatsoever; and by a further clause it exacted of all ministers, as a condition of retaining orders, a solemn profession of belief that it was unlawful for any cause whatsoever to take up arms against the Crown. This act threw one fifth of all the clergy out of their livings in a single day; united Presbyterians and Independents, fusing all Dissenters into one solid body against the Church and the extravagant prerogatives of the Crown. Thus we have the nuclei of two parties, one composed of extreme Churchmen putting into their creed very high notions of the nature of the monarchy; and the other composed of moderate Churchmen with the whole body of Dissenters.

The two parties were solidified by the agitation over the Exclusion Bill. King Charles II hadn't any religion to speak of, and didn't want any; but he did want a deal of money; and when his Parliaments were very slow to give it to him and very anxious to find out what he did with it, he went to the most Christian King, Louis XIV of France, for it. But if King Charles had no religion, his brother James had; he was an avowed and zealous Roman Catholic, and as Charles had no legitimate children, was like to be King of England soon. That was the outlook,—Englishmen reduced already by the pusillanimity of their king to a position of dependence upon Roman Catholic France, and with the prospect just before them of having a Romish king themselves. In those circumstances the agitation that arose in favor of the Bill to exclude James from the succession to the throne was such as England had never seen before. Petition after petition urging the Bill poured in from the party of moderate Churchmen and Dissenters, for all hated and dreaded Rome and France more than they hated and dreaded anything else. But what should the Church party say? How could they, for any cause, consistently advocate

the exclusion of the lawful heir from the throne that would belong to him? There was but a step between excluding the king of to-morrow and deposing the king of to-day. The latter was not only treason but sacrilege, violation of the law of God as well as the law of man; was not the former something very like it? From this party, therefore, came an equal multitude of documents formally declaring their abhorrence of these new doctrines as subversive of the true idea of the monarchy, and as ruinous alike to Church and State. The rival parties were commonly known as Petitioners and Abhorrers, but these awkward terms soon gave way to the shorter slang names of Whig and Tory.

But the Tory party was hardly formed before it found the ground cut out from under its feet by the Revolution of 1688. James the King by grace of God, to whom resistance was unlawful, was gone on his travels; ignominiously fled, and, by aid of a fishing-boat, got over to France. Alive, well and sound, and calling himself King of England still, but unfortunately for all practical purposes of kingship not at all usable now. What then? Was he to be recognized as king still, and England to get on without sight of any monarch for a time? Hardly a practicable scheme that,—especially since it seemed probable that his only son, a stout infant of a few months, who would have a divine right to the throne after him, would grow up as bad a Catholic as his father,—yet, when it came to a settlement of the matter, nine Tories out of every ten in the House of Commons could see no better way to fit their principles to the facts.

Here was James' eldest daughter, Mary, with her husband, William, on the spot. If that four months' infant were not the son of James,—and the Tories tried hard to believe he wasn't,—why then perhaps Mary might take the crown which by a convenient fiction her father might be said to have abdicated. But Mary wouldn't take it alone; there was no help for it; it was either no king at all just now or this Dutch William who had no divine right to anything in England except his wife, Mary. To this the Whig party was urging them; to this they had to come. William was made King of England by statute of Parliament.

There is nothing spectacular in a revolution like this in which no powder is burnt and no blood is spilt, and which might seem to consist principally in King James going out of the back door of Whitehall and King William coming in at the front; but it meant the practical refutation of one whole set of political ideas, and final decision that the power of the people is supreme, and the King is only their chief minister.

It might have been supposed that the Tory party would have little further reason for existence, now that the doctrines had been so completely refuted by the logic of events. But you know men by no means give up their principles as soon as they find they will not work. If our principles come into conflict with facts, why so much the worse for the facts. So it was here. Some few of the Tories, especially among the clergy, consistently refused to take the oath of allegiance to the new king at all; some satisfied their consciences by ingenious mental distinctions between a king *de facto* and a king *de jure;* and a good many took the attitude of the Vicar of Bray: but the Tory party still remained a solid center of opposition to William all through his reign. Plain country folk who didn't understand much of politics always had a vague notion that the present condition of things was but a temporary arrangement, and that sometime the King must come to his own again. It took seventy-five years to get that quite out of the heads of the English people.

And this Tory opposition constantly strengthened during the later years of William's reign. For William though a wise and just, was hardly a popular king. He was cold and phlegmatic; he was a Dutchman; men said he was fighting the battles of his own country and taking English men and money to do it with. So the Tory party gradually gained in influence, until during the last year of his life they got into a majority and were able to manage him about as they pleased. Meantime, the old King James had given up the struggle and was slowly dying in France; William's wife, Mary, was dead, and all parties were agreed that

after the death of William the other daughter of James, Anne, should come to the throne.

This was the state of affairs the year before the accession of Anne, when suddenly the great War of the Spanish Succession broke out. The King of Spain, a decrepit and half-witted old rake, was dying without heirs. Who was to be King of Spain after him? A famous treaty to which most of the great nations of Europe were parties provided that, in this event, the crown of Spain should go to a prince of the House of Austria; but on his death-bed the old King was induced by somebody to make a will giving his whole dominion to Philip of Anjou, who was the grown-up grandson of the great Louis XIV of France. Would Louis, in spite of his treaties, accept the will, unite the crowns of France and Spain and make himself master of Europe?—all Europe was waiting to see; it had not long to wait. Louis received the Spanish ambassador one day in the great audience room at Versailles with the famous words, "There are no more Pyrenees." And all Europe was up in arms in a week—all but England. William was in agony; the work of his life was undone; he entreated, he stormed even; but the Tory party had him in their power and they didn't want any more of William's Dutch wars.

But just then Louis made a mistake; after the death of the old King, James, he formally proclaimed his young son James, the Pretender, as King of England, and pledged him his support. This was of course to declare war on England, and in self-defense England must resist. William and the Whigs were delighted; the Tories reluctantly assented and the great war began. On the one side was France, with a little help from Bavaria and from Spain; on the other, England, Holland, Austria, Savoy, and the rest of Spain. With the very opening of hostilities William died, and our Queen Anne came to the throne. That was the way her reign began: the Tories in power; Anne herself, so far as so flaccid a person could be said to have any politics, a Tory too; a Tory ministry and a Tory queen with a great Whig war on their hands.

This Queen Anne—who was she? Let me confess that the picture of Anne that lives in my memory and seems to me really suggestive of her character is drawn not from statue or portrait, but from a much more vulgar source. Among the numerous chapels in Westminster Abbey is a little lumber room in which are locked up a number of wax figures of the kings and queens of England. Made first, at the death of the originals, I believe, and after the funeral pomps were over, set up here and shown to the public at a penny a head,—till some half century and more ago, when the dean turned the key on them. Well, Anne is there in her habit as she lived, portly, stout, in large red health, though with a somewhat puffed and helpless look. This is the Anne of my imagination,—a sluggish, inefficient, torpid soul, able to animate but feebly so much royal avoirdupois. Seldom has fortune entrusted to so small a mind the conduct of so great affairs.

It is impossible to throw any pride or luster of royalty about her. No brilliancy of parts or statesmanship, had she herself, and she had no appreciation of them in others. She was without humor and without taste. She had no lightness or versatility of mind. One thinks of her as a fat, dull, heavy, generally good-tempered body. Her temper, however, wasn't always of the best. Meekly stupid when she was in good humor and sulkily stupid when she was in bad humor, says Macaulay in his smart way. She had little judgment to guide her in the choice of her advisers. She chose friends without discrimination and discarded them on ignorant prejudice. Like dull people generally she had an immense regard for decorum, and once, it is said, dismissed a minister because he came into her presence in a tie-wig instead of a full-bottom. Moreover, as is often the case with stupid people, she could be invincibly obstinate on occasion; and the very thickness of her intellect made it impossible to dislodge her prejudices. She was kind to her friends, but as Swift said, she never had a stock of amity sufficient for more than one person at a time.

Yet Anne always had a kind of popularity with the Eng-

lish people, who never came very near her. She was an Englishwoman for one thing, and the people were tired of a Dutch monarch. "I know my own heart to be entirely English," she said in her first speech from the throne,—or some minister was bright enough to make her say it. Then she had those homely domestic virtues which the English, to their credit, so generally reverence. The one person in England duller than she, her husband, Prince George of Denmark, was a fat, incorrigible, blubbering little drunkard, who hadn't wit enough when occasionally sober to make either friends or enemies; but Anne loved him as if he had been St. George himself, and as his asthma and dropsy increased and the little man, who was over sixty, grew daily fatter and scantier of breath, Anne watched by him in an agony of suspense, and, when he dropped out of existence and nobody else in England cared or hardly knew, poor Anne was inconsolable. Her thirteen children were all dead before she became queen, and a good many people felt a sympathy for the lonesome and childless old lady.

Then, too, though she had some rather questionable habits, she really meant to be pious. The one clear motive that it is possible to trace in her conduct is a love for the English Church in which she had been brought up. It was this that attached her to the Tory party, and that party already knew nothing would so influence the Queen as the cry, "The Church is in danger."

This was the Queen of England. But of course such a queen as this didn't really govern England. The real sovereign of England during the first eight years of Anne's reign, was her great general, the Duke of Marlborough. The war put this great duke virtually at the head of affairs at once. I think the Duke of Marlborough was the greatest military genius England ever produced—greater even than Wellington. He had the best marshals of France against him, but he never lost a battle. The great English general was really commander-in-chief of all the allies and the one man whom France dreaded. For fifty years after the war the French nurses used to frighten the children into obedience by telling

them Marlborough was coming. And the Duke was a man of wonderful fascination of manner and great address. Men used to say he was as powerful in the court as in the camp. Certainly he exerted almost as much influence winters when he was at home in Parliament as summers when he was abroad in the field. But he was not a very trusty man, I think. He had played fast and loose with James and William in a not very manly way, and for my part, I can never feel sure that all through Anne's reign he would not have changed sides or even made himself useful to the Pretender if he had been quite certain it would have been for his own interest to do so. The fault his enemies were always throwing in his teeth was his avarice. It is true that the great man was very fond of money. As the war went on he got vast sums: the great palace of Blenheim alone that Mr. Vanbrugh built him cost the government near a million pounds; but he never got enough, and finally his enemies said plausibly, though I think it wasn't quite true, that the Duke of Marlborough wanted to prolong the war that he might keep on filling his pockets. The master of Europe was certainly very careful of his pennies: the night before the great battle of Blenheim when he sat in his tent with some officers examining plans of the field of to-morrow's battle, and an orderly brought in two lighted candles and placed them on the table, the great general rose and thriftily snuffed out one of them with his finger. When later, in the days of his unpopularity a gentleman who looked very like him, was mistaken for him on the streets in London and was like to be hustled, he satisfied the mob by turning to them and saying: "Good people, I can easily convince you I'm not the Duke of Marlborough; in the first place, I have only two shillings about me; and secondly, they are very much at your service."

In a great war money is even more necessary than men; and Marlborough was very fortunate in that his most intimate friend, Sidney Godolphin, was at the head of the treasury and managed those matters for him at home while Marlborough fought battles abroad. Godolphin was a

rather heavy, coarse, lumbering sort of man, who found his most congenial pleasure at the cock-pit and race-course, but he was one of the greatest masters of finance England had ever seen. I don't know that it has had any greater since. He was closely connected with Marlborough, for his son had married Marlborough's daughter. Both he and Marlborough were Tories when Anne's reign began, and held the highest places in her ministry for eight years.

But there was one person in England who was more powerful than the great Duke of Marlborough. The great Duke conquered Europe, but he was himself the humble subject of his wife, Sarah Jennings, Duchess of Marlborough. One can see that woman now and almost hear her,—her small, sharp-featured face, agile figure, alive to her finger ends, and her omnipotent tongue. For she wasn't for softness famed and sweet submissive grace, this Duchess, and didn't rule by artful compliance but rather *vi et armis*. Whether the Duke really loved her or was only afraid of her, the world can never quite make out; his constant letters to her, very devoted and very submissive, are among the oddest things I know of. At all events, he was very proud of her and found her services at home for him worth half a dozen armies. For when Queen Anne came to the throne this Duchess had been for some years her closest friend. They were inseparably intimate. They laid aside their titles in their correspondence and the Queen was "My dear Mrs. Morley" and the Duchess, "My dear Mrs. Freeman." Of course in such a friendship the Duchess had the best of it. By such a shrewd and commanding nature as hers, the poor old Queen seemed entirely manageable. In serious fact the political history of England for half a dozen years was decided by this imperious little woman who stood behind the throne.

These then are the persons most prominently in view when Anne's reign began. For some years the war was the absorbing subject of attention. It was, as I said just now, a somewhat curious state of affairs. The Tories were in a majority in the House of Commons; Marlborough and

Godolphin, Tories, were at the head of a Tory ministry, and the Queen herself so far as she was anything was a Tory, while the war was a Whig war. Yet the two parties at first were not so very widely separated. The Tories did not enter into the war so heartily as the Whigs, yet they recognized it as necessary, and both parties supported it. But a successful war is usually popular and strengthens the party that favors it most. When, therefore, Marlborough began to win his great victories, the Whigs began to grow stronger at home, and when an election fell (1705) just after the famous victory of Blenheim, the Whigs carried it and returned a large majority to the House of Commons. Marlborough and Godolphin were heartily in favor of the war, and, as they found they couldn't get on without the support of the Whigs, they gradually came over from the Tory to the Whig side, and by 1706 were voting with the Whigs regularly. And what was more, the Duchess of Marlborough went over too. The Whigs naturally didn't like Tories in the ministry; it seemed hard the Tories should be entrusted with Whig measures, and get the credit of a victorious war which they only went into because they couldn't help it. The Queen therefore found herself obliged to drop one Tory minister after another. In 1706 she put in two that were destined to become very famous pretty soon,—Mr. Robert Harley, and young Mr. Henry St. John, afterward to be made Lord Bolingbroke. Mr. Harley was only a very moderate Tory and Mr. St. John was young and brilliant, and the Queen hoped she might keep them in the ministry. But in 1708 the Whigs had another majority in Parliament and the Whig ministers, Marlborough and Godolphin among them, positively refused to serve unless their Tory colleagues were turned out, and so Harley and St. John had to go, and for the first time the ministry was altogether Whig. But though the Whigs seemed quite successful in 1708, in fact they were nearing a total defeat, and the most famous change of ministry that ever happened in England was at hand.

In 1709 the war was growing unpopular. After eight

years of victories, it seemed no nearer ending than when it began, and people were beginning to believe that Marlborough and the Whigs didn't wish to end it at all. The country land-owners especially were firm against it, for they said it made them poor and the trading Whigs rich. So soon as ever a town Whig could get a thousand pounds together he bought some of the public securities, which of course he didn't have to pay any taxes on, while the land had to pay him a handsome rate of interest every year.

They went to war to keep out the Pretender; but I suppose a good many Englishmen all through Anne's reign thought he would be king at last after all. When Anne's last child died, just before she became queen, the Parliament had decided that should she die childless, the crown should go to a granddaughter of her great-grandfather, the Electress Sophia; now a rather dull old lady of eighty, princess of a tiny German state about whom people knew or cared nothing; or if she should die before Anne, to her son, George, about whom people knew or cared even less. It seemed a long way to go after a King of England, a poor place to find one; and a good many Tories who didn't want to declare for the Pretender, wouldn't have been sorry to see him in England after Anne should go, and were beginning to be doubtful about the wisdom of fighting so long to keep him out. Anne herself was known to have a soft spot in her heart for this unlucky half-brother of hers, and if he could have changed his religion, I think he would have unquestionably become King of England. Then, too, the Tories, since they had gone into a minority, had discovered that the Church was in danger. By the famous Test Act, passed thirty years before, it had been provided that no person could hold any civil office who should not take the sacrament according to the form of the Church of England, and declare his disbelief in the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation. The object was of course to shut out both Dissenters and Romanists from all office; but it was found that there were some Dissenters whose consciences would allow them

to take the sacrament now and then from the hands of an English priest, and by this occasional conformity, qualify for office. A bill to prevent such occasional conformity, as it was called, was urged by the Tories, and, for three consecutive sessions of Parliament, it was pushed with the utmost obstinacy, and when it was at last found impossible to pass it, the Tories spread through the country the vague feeling that the Church was being betrayed by the Whigs. Through the country people all had a dim notion that something very wrong was going on: there was an endless war and it wasn't easy to say what for; the Queen was growing old and nobody knew what was to come after her; a great many bad Whigs were in power, taxes were high, and the Church was in danger, so the parson said.

But what I suppose had more to do with the change of ministry was the fact that Duchess Sarah and the Queen were not getting on well together of late. It seems a little odd to say that the history of all Europe was changed because a stupid old woman quarreled with a snappish old woman; but really it wasn't far from the truth. It is really surprising that the rupture didn't come sooner. The Queen had a kind of dull decorum and stupid stateliness which were sorely tried by the familiarities of the Duchess. The idea at last began to soak into Queen Anne's mind that she was being managed, and she didn't like it. Then the Duchess made one great mistake. Among the crowd of her hangers-on was a certain Abigail Hill, some distant poverty-stricken cousin, a mild, inoffensive, chirruping body. It occurred to Duchess Sarah to make this Abigail Hill of service as a maid of honor. But this Abigail Hill had a pair of eyes in her head, a quick wit, and considerable talent for back-stairs politics, and being one of those quiet, helpful bodies "never in the way and never out of the way," she soon made herself vastly serviceable to Anne. The Queen found it pleasanter to manage a maid than to be managed by a duchess, and the result was that before Duchess Sarah realized what was doing, she found herself quite out of favor, and her poverty-stricken cousin,

who had by this time been married to a Mr. Masham of the court, installed in her place. Now this Mrs. Masham was some sort of relation of Mr. Harley, the moderate Tory I mentioned a while ago; and Mr. Harley was not slow to avail himself of this opportunity. The Queen was tired of the Marlboroughs; she was doubtful about the war; she was frightened about the Church. Couldn't Mrs. Masham find opportunity to advise her that the safest way would be to dismiss Marlborough, get a new ministry, dissolve the Parliament, and begin anew? This was in 1709. The Queen was slowly making up what mind she had to take this advice, when an event happened which made a great hubbub of excitement over the country, and hurried her on to a decision. In the fall of 1709 a sermon was preached in London by a rather foolish parson named Doctor Sacheverell. He was a High Church minister of very mediocre abilities who seems to have had none too much of learning or piety, but made up for both by his assurance; and having a good manner and rather striking delivery he enjoyed a certain vulgar popularity. Preaching on what he was pleased to call the perils among false brothers in the Church, this man took occasion to urge some of the highest notions of royal prerogative; and to denounce in unmeasured terms all those who didn't maintain them. The cry of "The Church is in danger" had never been sounded quite so shrilly.

It was a foolish sermon and the ministry would have done best to regard it as such and let it alone. But in an evil moment they chose to impeach him before the House of Lords. It was the spark that set things ablaze. The Tories accepted it as a challenge. The clergy were indignant. Sacheverell posed as a martyr. The trial came off in 1710, and London was in a whirl over it. Sacheverell was attended by the chaplain of the Queen. The ladies had his portrait in their prayer books and on their handkerchiefs. The mob hustled everybody who wouldn't shout for him, and improved the opportunity of tearing down several meeting-houses. In the end, though he was convicted, his penalty was only a nominal one, and when the silly parson

left London after his trial, his journey into the country was a triumphal progress that set the church bells ringing all over England.

It was plain that the Queen could make up her mind now. In the later summer of 1710 she dissolved Parliament to call a new one. And the elections went overwhelmingly Tory everywhere. The Queen dismissed the Duchess, who was so indignant that she threw away her gold key, and, when she was turned out of her apartments in St. James, tore down the mantel and carried off the brass locks. Godolphin had to give up his treasurer's staff and all the Whigs went out of office. Marlborough it wasn't so easy to get on without, but he lost his place next year. England had a Tory queen, a Tory ministry, a Tory House of Commons, and next year to make all complete, Anne took the unprecedented step of creating twelve new Tory peers at a stroke, and thus made a Tory majority in the Lords too. "Do you vote singly or by your foreman?" asked the Whig Lord Wharton when they came into the House for the first time. The revolution was now complete, the last great Tory administration was fairly in. It was this administration that remained in power the remaining four years of Anne's reign, and was the last and only great Tory ministry for more than fifty years.

At the head of it were two men very different from each other and not well adapted to work together,—Robert Harley and Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke. Mr. Harley, whom Anne soon made Lord Oxford, was a slow, cautious, good man of business, honest, well-disposed, but of no statesmanship. He made an impression on people by a heavy serious air of wisdom and moderation, but it was difficult to find out whether he had any clear views on any subject or not. Before any difficult question he had the sage and non-committal air of the Sir Roger de Coverley who thinks "there's much to be said on both sides." Men called him a trimmer, but the truth was he never could exactly make up his own mind on most matters of state. Queen Anne complained that he seemed to go into gen-

eralities, and she couldn't understand him; I suppose he didn't well understand himself. When he and his party were out, he knew he wanted to be in, and was rather shrewd in his schemes to get in; but once in, he didn't know just what to do with the power put into his hands. Then, too, he was the most dilatory of mortals; the greatest procrastinator alive, said his best friend, Dean Swift. He had the hesitating caution of a man who didn't fully know his road. On the question which was now beginning to agitate all minds, what was to come after the Queen, he was careful not to commit himself, but waited for events.

The other great minister, Bolingbroke, was the opposite of all this. He was an extreme Tory, not from principle—for of principles he had none—but from expediency. He was in fact a Jacobite and was certainly concerned—no one knew or ever will know how deeply—in schemes to bring in the Pretender. He was brilliant, versatile, rapid, rather than wise or temperate in judgment. In his earlier life he had made himself proficient in all the fashionable vices of his time, and rather prided himself on keeping them well in practice, though it cost him his health and his character. He aspired to be the Alcibiades of his age; orator, statesman, poet, gallant, and to shine in all at once. He wrote with equal flippancy a letter of intrigue and a dispatch on which the fate of Europe depended. But such brilliancy is bought only at the expense of the sounder qualities of statesmanship.

It was evident, at all events, that two such men as Harley and Bolingbroke couldn't long get on together. They did not. The new ministry had to do something to avert the danger to the Church of which so much had been said before they came in; and so they passed the act forbidding occasional conformity, and ordered fifty new churches erected in London. They were built by Wren and Gibbs and you see the spires of them wherever you go in London now. But their great task was to end the war. It was really for this that they had been elected. But to end the war wasn't so easy a matter. England was only one of

four great allied powers who had been fighting France, and none of the other three was ready for peace yet, so that England was forced into the unhandsome position of deserting her allies. Moreover, now that Marlborough was dismissed, the most dangerous enemy of France was out of the field and the demands of France rose very much: three years before Louis would have made peace on almost any terms; now he was reluctant and exacting. And more than all this, some of the extreme Tories, among whom probably was Bolingbroke, as the Queen drew near her end, thought it increasingly probable that the Pretender would come in after her death, and hesitated to put into the articles of peace any terms that would make that too difficult for him. The Tories indeed were in an awkward position. If they were true to the Church, they must keep him out. They found it hard to keep either article of the creed without breaking the other. In such a position of affairs most of them, like Harley, thought it best to proceed cautiously and decide on a policy when forced to. They distrusted Bolingbroke, for they knew he would try to do something brilliant, and they never could tell what it would be. And so as the negotiations for peace dragged on, my Lord Bolingbroke and my Lord Oxford grew farther and farther apart. Bolingbroke took affairs pretty much into his own hands, and when the treaty was at last signed in 1713, the two ministers were thoroughly estranged. Shrewd little Mrs. Masham, who was managing the Queen, all this time had been choosing between the ministers. Her cousin, Mr. Harley, gave her a good deal of advice, but he didn't give her much money; but my Lord Bolingbroke, who seemed to have a great deal of money and very little conscience in the use of it, had kept her purse well filled, and sent her brother, Jack Hill, off on a handsome expedition against Quebec, where you remember he made a mess of it. So Mrs. Masham concluded she would go with my Lord Bolingbroke.

In the summer of 1714 the poor old Queen was evidently near her end, though no one expected the end to come quite so suddenly. "Her Majesty's gracious person grows so

stout," says a contemporary letter, "that she cannot take her accustomed exercise, while she indulges herself somewhat too freely at table." She was tormented by the wrangling of the ministers; she naturally liked the heavy Harley and was suspicious of the brilliant Bolingbroke; but at last urged on by Mrs. Masham and irritated by Harley's indifference, she surrendered to Bolingbroke. What should happen after she was gone was now the question that everybody was asking with the feverish anxiety that came from the certainty that it must soon be answered one way or the other. The old Electress Sophia died in the early summer and George, the Elector, her son, was now the Hanoverian heir. The Tories, even the moderate ones like Swift, were of the opinion that before her death the Tory or Church party should be so strongly entrenched in power that even if the Elector should come to the throne, he would be unwilling to dispossess them; while if the Pretender should succeed, he would be required to give full guarantee for the security of the English Church, although he did not enter that communion himself. But Harley was dilatory, disinclined to positive or sweeping measures, distrustful of the more extreme Tories, and distrusted by all parties. Bolingbroke, on the other hand, though of course he still made no open profession of favor to the Pretender, had evidently come to the conclusion that he would come in, and he made all his calculations for that event. He had even designated the members of the first ministry under the new king. But his plans were frustrated at the last minute.

On the night of Tuesday, the twenty-sixth of July, 1714, there was a long and angry cabinet meeting. The Queen, it is said, quarreled with Harley; there were high words, and before it was over, the Queen took the white staff of office from Harley into her own hands, and indignantly dismissed him. That was Anne's last cabinet meeting; the excitement of it killed her. Next morning she had a slight stroke of apoplexy and took to her bed. From that day to this it is said no monarch of England has ever attended a meeting of the cabinet. Bolingbroke was left supreme; it was evi-

dent the crisis was only a few days away. He made out a list of new ministers, almost all Jacobites, at the head of them, Bishop Atterbury, the rankest Jacobite in London. But they were never to be appointed. The Queen was stricken on Wednesday. The country was in an agony of suspense. Marlborough, who had been in exile, was waiting in Ostend to do no one knew what. Bolingbroke seemed ready. But he was outwitted at last. Among the Tories was a shrewd, long-headed man who had been watching things and keeping still, the Duke of Shrewsbury. He was much liked of Anne lately, but Bolingbroke was shy of him. Now the white staff of treasurer, which the dying Queen had taken from Oxford Tuesday night, she had not yet given to any one else, when on Friday morning a meeting of the Privy Council was called. Then as now, no councillor was expected to attend unless he had received a special summons, though having a legal right to do so. Bolingbroke had picked his men and thought he was sure of them all. They had hardly met out at Kensington and the news of the Queen's condition had just been received, when the doors were opened and in walked two Whig noblemen, Argyle and Somerset, and said that, knowing the danger of the Queen, they had hastened, though not summoned, to render all assistance in their power. The Duke of Shrewsbury, who was evidently expecting them, arose quietly and thanked them for their interest; and then to the astonishment of the Tories, the two Whigs, who had taken seats, suggested that in view of the danger of the Queen, the post of Lord Treasurer be immediately filled, and that the Duke of Shrewsbury be recommended to Her Majesty for that office. Astounded at the quiet assurance of these men, the Jacobites did not see how to oppose it, and at noon that day the dying Queen placed the white staff in Shrewsbury's hands. Bolingbroke saw that his game was out. Saturday the city was put under arms; word was sent to the Elector of Hanover; the Pretender's cause was lost. Sunday morning at a little before noon the heralds proclaimed: "God save his Gracious Majesty, King George I." The time of Queen

Anne was over. The Earl of Oxford was removed on Tuesday; the Queen died on Sunday. "What a world is this and how does fortune banter us!" wrote Bolingbroke to Swift next day.

With the death of Anne my story really ends. With that event indeed begins a new chapter in English history. It wasn't merely the accession of a new line; it was the final triumph of one party and the final defeat of the other. "I see plainly the Tory party is gone," said Bolingbroke two days after the death of Anne. Its most characteristic doctrines: the divine right of kings, the duty of implicit obedience, the virtual independence of the King over the Parliament, the supremacy of Church over State,—all had been triumphantly refuted by the hard logic of events. Not that no one held those opinions any more; on the contrary Bolingbroke was probably right in saying that three-fourths of the people out of town held them vaguely still; but they were hopelessly inoperative. For the logic of Tory sentiment led to Jacobites, and Jacobites meant a Roman Catholic monarchy.

The result was that after the accession of the House of Hanover, a small portion of the Tory party became active Jacobites, went over to France and joined the Pretender as Bolingbroke did, or stayed at home and plotted for him; but the great majority of them gave up the struggle and retired from politics altogether. When the party emerged with some prominence a generation later, it was a new party with the old name. The Whigs had it all their own way, and after some quarrels among them the control of the government in 1717 fell almost entirely into the hands of that shrewd man, Robert Walpole. King George I was a great awkward, sleepy, hulky though not unkindly nor altogether witless, German, who couldn't speak a half dozen words of English. For the first time he made it evident that the English could get on quite as well with a wooden King. Quite content to rule, he left the government to his minister, Walpole. So long as Walpole let him comfortably alone, furnished him money enough to satisfy his vulgar avarice and

kept the Duchess of Kendall's pockets full too, he was content to allow his minister to manage affairs as he would. He couldn't speak any English, and Walpole couldn't speak a word of German, and their very limited intercourse was carried on in atrocious Latin. When George I died and George II came to the throne in 1727, it was merely changing a big, good-natured German for a little, waspish German, that was all. Walpole governed still. His long ministry is important in the development of English commerce, colonies, society; but it had little political history, and we may dismiss it altogether for it had almost no influence on literature. Walpole himself was a big, coarse, fox-hunting squire, who had no taste or knowledge of letters, and not a cent of money to waste on them. Swift and Gay and Pope discharged some of their fiercest satire upon him, but they might as well have tried to worry a rhinoceros with a popgun. Some contemptuous or indifferent reply was all the notice they could provoke from "Bob, the poets' foe." Letters fell at once into neglect, and it was under Walpole that Johnson slaved and Savage starved. Government patronage of men of letters and the close connection of politics with literature closed when Anne died; and I may therefore close my survey then.

THE LIFE OF JONATHAN SWIFT

I

THE figure of Jonathan Swift has for the student of literary biography [1] an interest such as attaches to no other man of letters of the Queen Anne time. And this not merely because he was the most strenuous and original genius of that age. His public career abounds in striking dramatic situations, and provoked bitter controversy that has lasted ever since; while the story of his private life is tinged with some of the colors of romance, and ends at last in the most somber tragedy. To Swift himself his career seemed a series of defeats. Towards the close of his life he wrote to Bolingbroke,[2] "I remember when I was a little boy I felt a great fish at the end of my line which I drew up almost on the ground; but it dropped in, and the disappointment vexes me to this very day, and I believe it was the type of all my future disappointments." In truth it would seem an ill star that presided over this man's nativity. With a native scorn and dread of dependence, he was born into the narrowest poverty. With abilities greater than those of any man of letters in his time, and social powers that made him admired even more than he was dreaded, he was nevertheless doomed to receive fewer of the rewards of life than fell to any of his rivals, and to pass the greater part of his days in a country he despised. With affections naturally strong and tender beyond most men's, he was destined by a cruel irony of fate to find those affections sought where they could never be bestowed, and to pass his days without the solace of the dearest relation-

[1] This essay on Swift, originally designed for the introduction to a projected volume of selections in the Athenæum Press Series, never published, has been slightly altered and rearranged to fit the present volume. [L. B. G.]

[2] April 5, 1729. Works (Scott's 2d ed., Edinburgh, 1824), Vol. XVII, p. 253.

ship of life. With an almost extravagant admiration for sanity and homely vigor of thought, he lived all his life in terror of the inevitable advance of mental disease, and finally was forced to pass through the dismal stages of insanity and idiocy before the kindly dismissal of death.

II

Nor did Swift's ill-fortune end with his life. He has been very unlucky in his biographers, though their number and long succession attest to the interest the story of his life has always excited. The earlier attempts at a biography are especially inadequate and unjust. The Earl of Orrery, a priggish egotist, who made the acquaintance of Swift as late as 1732, published a vain and spiteful book, *Remarks upon the Life and Writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift,* only six years after the dean's death. Good, but rather dull, Dr. Delany came to the defense of Swift, in his *Observations upon Lord Orrery's Remarks,* published in 1754. Delany had known Swift intimately since about 1715, and his book is a valuable storehouse of characteristic anecdote and reminiscence; but it is a defense rather than a biography, and does not pretend to give a detailed account of Swift's life or an impartial estimate of his work. Dr. Hawkesworth, dullest and most pompous of essayists, prefixed to a new edition of Swift's Works a *Memoir* (1755) which contained no new facts and no valuable opinions. The same year, one Deane Swift, son-in-law of Mrs. Whiteway, Swift's cousin and housekeeper, answered both Orrery and Delany, in an uncommonly silly book, which is chatter from cover to cover. To complete the list of works written shortly after the dean's death, we must add the *Memoirs* (1748) of Mrs. Pilkington, a vulgar adventuress with a kittenish vivacity and trickiness of manner, whose book is a curious farrago in which lie and truth are vexatiously mixed.

In the next generation Dr. Johnson's *Life* (1781) in the *Lives of the Poets,* is stiff, unsympathetic, and adds little to our information; but at all events it contains no nonsense

and still may be called one of the best of the shorter sketches. Then in 1785, with great flourish of trumpets as the final life, appeared the *Life* by Thomas Sheridan. This Sheridan was the son of an old friend of Swift, and the father of Richard Brinsley Sheridan: he seems to have had his father's blundering arrogance and his son's shiftlessness without the brains of either one. His *Life* is a tedious, inaccurate, garrulous book. If to this list we add a short *Inquiry into the Life of Swift* (1789) by George Monck Berkeley,—grandson of Bishop Berkeley,—we shall have most of the books upon Swift written during the eighteenth century. All of them, with the exception of Johnson's, were written by persons of mediocre ability, and no one of them can take rank as an adequate and impartial life.

In 1814 appeared the *Life* by Walter Scott, forming afterwards the first volume of his edition of Swift's works. Scott's clear and flowing narrative continued to be until quite recently the best account of Swift's career; but, while he had gathered considerable new matter, Scott was too much in haste to test his facts or to digest them, and his work, therefore, is occasionally inaccurate, and on most of the disputed questions of Swift's life, it shows hesitation or uncertainty of opinion. A few years later, 1819, a valuable life of Swift was written by William Monck Mason of Dublin. Mason effectually consigned his work to oblivion by writing it in villainous English, choking a thin strip of text in a thicket of notes, and then thrusting the whole into the middle of a stodgy quarto, *The History and Antiquities of the Church of St. Patrick*. But he was a laborious and accurate scholar, and his portentous body of notes is a storehouse of facts of the utmost importance to the student of the life of Swift. Mason was an enthusiastic defender of Swift: but the general verdict was still the other way. The essayists—save Hazlitt—and the historians have every one his fling at the great satirist. Jeffrey sums him up with ready assurance as "an apostate in politics, indifferent in religion, a defamer of humanity, the slanderer of the statesmen who served him, the destroyer of the women who loved him." "Essentially

irreligious from a vulgar temperament," says De Quincey with his usual recklessness of phrase, "an abominable, one-sided degradation of humanity." "The haughtiest, the most vindictive of mortals," says Macaulay. "He had," says Lord Stanhope, tartly, "a thorough knowledge of the baser parts of human nature—for they were his own." Even so kindly a cynic as Thackeray belabors the dean with such epithets as "bully," "bravo," "outlaw," "Yahoo," and believes that he was tormented with a life-long consciousness of his own religious insincerity.

But, in the long run, posterity is just. A change in the judgment upon Swift is marked by the appearance of the first—and only—volume of the *Life* by John Forster, in 1875. Mr. Forster's style is sometimes operose, and his vast admiration for his subject leads him occasionally into a kind of Boswellian diffuseness and detail; but his patient industry in the collecting and sifting of materials, and his evident determination not to be misled either by prejudice or by enthusiasm in his search for the exact truth, promised to make his book the standard life of Swift. Unfortunately, he died shortly after the issue of his first volume. The materials he had gathered were, however, put at the disposal of Sir Henry Craik for his *Life of Jonathan Swift* (1882). Sir Henry Craik has reached conclusions different from those of Mr. Forster on a few matters,—especially on the vexed question of the marriage to Stella,—but on the whole he gives the same favorable estimate of Swift's character that Mr. Forster had promised. That estimate has been repeated by later writers, like Mr. Moriarty and Mr. Churton Collins. In fact it has now become the general one. Few critics to-day would repeat the reckless charges of political treachery, religious hypocrisy, general misanthropy so freely made against the great dean seventy-five years ago.

III

Jonathan Swift was born in Dublin, November 30, 1667. Both his parents were of English stock; and he always pro-

tested that he was Irish only in the accident of his birth. He was a posthumous child, his mother having been left a widow some eight months before his birth. His father was the seventh or eighth of ten brothers, only the eldest of whom, Godwin, seems to have been a man of enough energy to command marked success. This Godwin was a lawyer. He had come over to Dublin early in life and by energy in his profession, and by repeated marriage with a series of heiresses, he had accumulated a handsome fortune. His younger brother, Jonathan—father of the future dean—followed Godwin to Dublin; but he had not the vigor or shrewdness to repeat the elder brother's success. He picked up such scraps of legal business as he could find, obtained by the influence of his brother an appointment as steward of the Inns of Court, married a bright but penniless young Englishwoman, and died at the age of twenty-five, leaving her only an annuity of twenty pounds a year.

It was to Godwin Swift that the young widow naturally turned for aid to rear her son. At the age of six the boy, Jonathan Swift, was sent to Kilkenny School at the charges of his uncle Godwin. At about the same time, his mother left Ireland to live with her own family in Leicestershire; and mother and son would seem to have seen each other but little for the next fifteen years. After nine years at Kilkenny, Swift was entered (1682) at the University of Dublin. Swift's university life was always a sore spot in his memory. The assistance of his uncle, though probably adequate to his needs, was not very generous, and apparently was not sweetened by a gracious manner of bestowment. "He gave me the education of a dog," said Swift, rather too bluntly, years afterward. But to his haughty temper any assistance would have been galling. He always had a morbid dread of dependence of any kind. Nor was he likely to care much for the university. A young man of keener relish for learning, if his pride had been wounded by poverty, might have withdrawn himself from his companions and with haughty moroseness buried himself in his books. Samuel Johnson did that, at Oxford, a half century later. But

Swift never had the scholar's temper in any high degree. All through life, he was satisfied only when in the thick of affairs. He prized learning only as a means to practical ends; and the dull routine of the university curriculum seemed to him quite out of relation with life. It was not mastery of books he wanted, but mastery of men; and at the university mastery of men was quite impossible to an awkward sizar. It is probable, indeed, that the early biographers were over ready to pronounce Swift a dunce in the university. Mr. Forster has fished up from oblivion a leaf out of the college roll, containing the record of Swift's examinations, which shows that he did well in his classics, and not so ill as some of his classmates in his other studies. Dull, we may be sure, Jonathan Swift never was; but restless, angry, and idle. He himself said, later in life, that "he was so much discouraged and sunk in his spirits that he too much neglected some parts of his academic studies, for some parts of which he had no great relish by nature . . . : so that when the time came for taking his degree of Bachelor, although he had lived with great regularity and due observance of the statutes, he was stopped of his degree for dullness and insufficiency; and at last admitted, in a manner little to his credit, which is called in that college, *speciali gratia*." [1] The truth seems to be that he would study only what he liked, and that he found very little which he liked. In the Latin classics and in history, however, he read carefully, especially during the later years of his stay at the university. He took his Bachelor's degree in 1686 and had nearly completed three years of further residence when the university was broken up by the troubles attending the Revolution, and he was forced to leave Dublin. Not knowing where to turn, he went to Leicestershire, to stay for a time with his mother.

The months he spent in Leicestershire could hardly have been happy ones. He had just passed his twenty-first birthday. His university career was ended. Angrily throwing off the sense of dependence under which he had lived thus

[1] *Autobiographical Anecdotes*, Works, Vol. I, pp. 509-10.

far, he eagerly looked out for some chance at the work and the prizes of life. But every door seemed shut. With a wit such as no other young man in England was master of, an admirable genius for practical affairs, and a proud consciousness of his parts, he could see no way of setting his powers at work. In these circumstances he decided to act upon a hint from his mother. She was a distant relative of the wife of Sir William Temple, and it was at her suggestion that Swift applied to that great man for employment. The application was favorably received: and thus, in 1689, for lack of anything better to do, Jonathan Swift came to reside at Moor Park in the family of Sir William Temple.

IV

Sir William Temple was a very famous man. He had earned in his earlier years a reputation as a diplomatist. He had negotiated the Triple Alliance. He had arranged the royal match between William and Mary. He was a great man, but he knew when to leave off. Always studious of his own safety, he would attempt no task of doubtful issue, and accept no position of personal risk. He took no chances. Accordingly, when danger thickened before the Revolution, having done one or two great things, he prudently decided to retire on the strength of them. He had a natural taste for a little gardening and a little literature; a bit of romance in his youth had been followed by a most quiet and happy domestic life; and through all those troublous years from 1680 to 1688 no impulse either of duty or of ambition could move him from his library and his orangery to the agitations of public life. When William came to the throne he offered his old friend, who was then living at Sheen, the position of Secretary of State; but Temple declined and withdrew still further away from London to his estate of Moor Park in Surrey. On this secluded estate, with its dignified manor-house, its canals and gardens in the trim Dutch style, and wide heathery commons and lonesome woods encircling all,

Temple passed the rest of his life. "The measure of choosing well," says Temple at the close of one of his most charming dilettante essays,[1] "is whether a man likes what he has chosen; which, I thank God, has befallen me. . . . I have passed five years without ever going once to town." A reserved, decorous, sometimes just a little pompous old man, who had a king come down to see him now and then, and never lost among his cherry trees the grand air he had learned in courts. In his shadow one sees the pale though pleasant figure of Lady Temple, and Temple's widowed sister, Lady Giffard. That is the family.

Such was the scene of dignified retirement into which was now ushered young Jonathan Swift. He could hardly have found it congenial. He never had much respect for dignities and he always hated retirement. With the exception of two periods of absence in Ireland he was a member of this household until Temple's death in 1699. On the whole they can hardly have been happy years. We need not believe that, as Macaulay says, he lived in the servants' hall and sat at the second table; later biographers have shown that to be only one of Macaulay's bits of picturesque. He seems to have been at first Temple's amanuensis and reader, later his private secretary, and at last his confidential adviser and intimate friend. But at best it was a relation of dependence under which the eager pride of the young man chafed sorely. The heavy decorum of Temple, who as he grew older grew more and more like Polonius, must often have been well-nigh intolerable to a young fellow who was always inclined to regard the stately conventionalities of life as no better than solemn shams. "Faith," growled Swift, years afterward, "I've plucked up my spirits since then; he spoiled a fine gentleman." Traces of the disease which made him restless and irritable all his life can already be seen in these early years. But what was worst of all, his position with Temple gave him no access to that active life in which he longed to play a part. Never was there a young man more ambitious, a temper more restless and hungry

[1] Of Gardening.

for power. But what could he do, shut up with a superannuated statesman who was playing at Greek and gardening?

Yet there were compensations. Temple's excellent library was always at his command; and he did a vast amount of that various and unsystematic but eager reading which is probably the best reading a young man can do. And he was perhaps as much indebted to Temple's counsels as to Temple's books. Always interested in affairs, Swift was watching keenly the game of contemporary politics; and Temple, who had known every player and every move in that game for more than twenty years, found a complacent pleasure in acting as his mentor. In the later years of their intimacy Swift, as he says himself, was "trusted with affairs of great importance," chief of which was a private message of advice to King William on the matter of his veto of the Triennial Bill. It was to Temple's extended political connections also that Swift owed his introduction to a few of the prominent men of the day. King William himself was an occasional visitor at Moor Park, and promised the young Irish secretary whom he met there some employment; but he never did anything more for Swift than to teach him to cut asparagus in the Dutch fashion. On the whole, these years with Temple were no ill schooling for the part Swift was later to play in the political history of his time. Moreover, he was learning the use of his weapons; he was teaching himself to write. He tried verses first,—Pindaric odes after the stilted fashion of Cowley. They were very poor verses,—hard prose, inflated, deranged, mangled almost beyond the possibility of recognition. He sent some of this stuff to Dryden; everybody was sending to Dryden then, and one shudders to think how much balderdash the great critic must have gone through. But Dryden's familiar verdict in this case must have been easy and quite safe, "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet." The prediction was verified. Swift lacked utterly the first great requisite of the poetic character, the sense of beauty. Indeed, he seemed to have something like the opposite of that, a quick sense of ugliness

and deformity; and though he wrote, first and last, a good many verses, he never wrote any poetry. He was wise enough not to try it again; but he constantly exercised himself in that art of prose composition of which he became so great a master. As he afterwards said, he "writ and burnt, and writ and burnt again, upon all manner of subjects, more than perhaps any man in England." Before the close of the century he certainly could write a stronger prose than any man in England.

Swift finally decided to go into the Church. It is possible that in other circumstances he might have chosen differently. He was ambitious of power, and could he have had the aid of wealth and social connections, might have preferred some more direct avenue to public life. But let it not be thought that he was driven into the Church, as a last resort, by poverty or indolence. He was not the man to cry, "Put me in the priest's office that I may have a piece of bread." On the contrary he had a morbid fear of such a charge; and it was only after the possibility of that reproval had been removed by the offer of a sinecure civil position from Temple, that he consented to take orders. His education, his connections fitted him for the Church. His moral convictions were strong, and his sense of duty decided. He did his duty in the Church, as he conceived that duty, faithfully all his life long. From the day he took orders till his death his constant thought, his most strenuous endeavors, were given to the service of the Church of England. In those days of the Sacheverells and the Burnets, when one great political party always called itself by preference the Church party, the office and work of the ministry was more largely political than we now conceive them; and Swift may be excused if his attention was mostly given to the public and political side of his work, and if he looked eagerly for advancement in the calling he had chosen. Yet it should be remembered that, throughout his career, whether in his little Irish living where, as the story goes, he read the service to his solitary clerk beginning, "Dearly beloved Roger, the Scripture moveth you and me in sundry places," or in the great cathe-

dral of St. Patrick's, it cannot be said that he ever omitted the conscientious performance of the distinctively clerical duties of his office. Doubtless he was not in all respects well fitted for that office. He was never at his best in the pulpit. He lacked that charity that suffereth long and is kind, that hopeth and endureth. And he knew it; and doubtless often had doubts as to the wisdom of his choice. But we need not believe, as Thackeray rather meanly suggests, that he was tormented by the consciousness of a life-long hypocrisy. He was not driven by poverty or servility to enter a profession he did not respect, or to teach a faith he did not believe. It was in 1694 when he made his choice. He parted—not very amicably—with Temple and went over to Ireland to be ordained, thus closing his second period of residence at Moor Park.[1]

His absence lasted only about two years. He was given the living of Kilroot, a beggarly little parish in a poverty-stricken district where there were hardly more than a dozen families and those mostly Presbyterians, with a tumble-down hut for a church, and a living of scant one hundred pounds a year. As far as any possibilities of active life were concerned, he might as well have been with Robinson Crusoe on his island. It was but natural that when Temple urged him to come back, he turned over his parish to a vicar, and came. He remained at Moor Park this time until Temple's death.

These last years of his stay at Moor Park were more pleasant than the first. He was received by Temple now as an equal and not as a dependent. Having decided his profession, he was no longer harassed by uncertainties as to his career. Once a priest, always a priest. Moreover, he now began to exercise with some confidence his marvelous powers as a writer. His first satire, *The Battle of the Books,* though not published until 1704, was written during these years. An idle controversy had arisen among French writ-

[1] In 1690 he had gone over to Ireland in the vain endeavor to find employment there, and, returning to Leicestershire, had spent some months with his mother before he could bring himself, at the close of 1691, to go back to Temple.

ers of the age of Louis XIV as to the comparative value of ancient and modern literature. In an evil hour Temple introduced the discussion to English readers in an essay on *Ancient and Modern Learning* in which he took the position Chaucer indicates in his quatrain,—

> out of olde feldes, as men seith,
> Cometh all this newe corn fro yeer to yere;
> And out of olde bokes, in good faith,
> Cometh all this newe science that men lere.

Modern writers draw all their best, he said, from the ancient; modern learning was mostly got out of libraries, not out of life. But his essay has little to recommend it to us except the charm of its genteel loftiness of style. Temple wrote like a gentleman, but unfortunately he wrote very unlike a scholar. With the calm assurance too often accompanying that little knowledge which is a dangerous thing, he asserts that modern learning and letters are inferior in interest and value to ancient, and undertakes to show that the older a book is, the better it is. This latter thesis he incautiously exemplifies by citing the spurious *Epistles of Phalaris* as at once the oldest and the best specimen of this kind of writing. Temple was answered courteously enough by William Wotton, a young Cambridge scholar; but his unlucky slip with reference to the *Epistles of Phalaris* exposed him to a more formidable antagonist. Richard Bentley, who was already the best classicist in England, in an examination of a new edition of the *Epistles* just issued by Temple's friend, Charles Boyle, took occasion to heap merciless ridicule upon the scholarship of a gentleman who could mistake the forgery of a Greek rhetorician in the first century for one of the oldest books in the world. It was at this juncture, when Boyle and Atterbury and Smalridge were rallying for a reply to Bentley, and a very pretty quarrel was on, that Swift came to the defense of his patron. He was quick to see his first opportunity for a telling personal satire. Bentley's arrogant swash-buckler figure, in particular, made an excellent butt for the young fellow to tilt at.

He set the ancients and moderns fighting each other, and told the story of their conflict in high Homeric fashion. Of course the moderns have the worst of it, and their leaders, Wotton and Bentley, come to grief most ignominiously. To readers of to-day *The Battle of the Books* is probably not one of the most interesting of Swift's works: but it is one of the most characteristic. Swift knew little about the critical question in dispute between the scholars, and cared less: the whole controversy seemed to him an excellent example of the humbug and self-satisfied pother of a bookish scholarship, of all the solemn fuss that is made over the rubbish of critical learning that hasn't any relation to life. The satire is the first of his many attacks upon the consecrated dulness of pedantry. It is written, moreover, in the vivacious and defiant manner of his early years, crowded with humorous images, and contains some passages—like the famous apologue of the spider and the bee—which set universal truth in homely allegory as no one but Swift knew how to do. To Swift himself *The Battle of the Books* must have been a proof of his own powers. He wrote no more Pindarics. He was already at work on his next and greatest satire, *The Tale of a Tub*.

When Temple died in January, 1699, Swift was left to push his fortunes as best he could. He went over to Ireland as chaplain of Lord Berkeley, one of the Irish Lords-Justice, who promised him preferment. But when, a few weeks later, the deanery of Derry fell vacant, the secretary of Berkeley coolly informed Swift the place would be given to another unless he would bid a thousand pounds for it. "God confound you both for a couple of scoundrels," said Swift; and waited for something that could be had without the price of simony. In February, 1700, he accepted the living of Laracor, with two small adjacent parishes, worth in all about two hundred pounds a year. He continued to reside for some months longer as chaplain with Berkeley, but in 1701 assumed charge of his parish at Laracor. Although much absent from it, he called this place his home for the next twelve years.

V

Swift was followed to Laracor by one person whose friendship had already begun to call out whatever was tender in his rugged nature, and whose story was ever afterwards to be told in connection with his. The friendship of Swift and Stella is probably the most famous in English literary history; but much needless mystery has certainly been thrown about it. Twelve years before, when Swift first came to Moor Park he found there, in attendance upon Lady Giffard as a kind of companion, a Mrs. Johnson, whose husband, Temple's steward, had been dead several years, and who had with her two daughters. The younger of these daughters, Esther, when Swift first met her, was, he says, a girl of six years; it seems she was seven, just learning to read and not talking quite plainly yet. We have no details of the early friendship, but we may safely conjecture that the eager Master of Arts of twenty-one looked not unkindly upon this little maid, who was the only person having any spirit of youth in all that solemn and rather priggish household. We know that he taught her to read, helped her in her copy books, and learned some of her childish speech so well that he never forgot it to his dying day. Any other relation than that of something like big brother and little sister would have seemed absurd to either of them then. But when Temple died both of them were ten years older. The fourteen years that separate seven and twenty-one are a wider interval than the fourteen years that separate seventeen and thirty-one. Stella was now a young lady, and Swift was still a young man. Yet it seems clear that, whatever it may have been to her, to Swift their relation was the same it had been at first. To him, at least, that relationship never seemed changed. This girl had grown to womanhood under his instruction; he had watched her reading, he had come to be her adviser and nearest friend; but there is not a scrap of evidence that his regard for her was other than the wise and tender solicitude of a guardian or an elder

brother.[1] After the household of Temple was broken up, Stella went over to Ireland; partly because, after the second marriage of her mother she no longer had any home in England, while she had some little property in Ireland; but principally, as was no secret, that she might be near her friend Swift. She was accompanied by an elderly relative, Mrs. Dingley, a kind of mute in the story of whom no recorded word remains to show what sort of a living being she was; but whose company made it possible for Stella to live in Ireland without the annoyance of gossip. When Swift was absent from Laracor, the two ladies usually occupied the vicarage; on his return they retired to lodgings in the vicinity or in the little town of Trim, hard by. They were the Doctor's friends and housekeepers. He was very friendly to them, and kind enough to look after their little money matters. That was all; and no one seems to have thought of making any comment, save perhaps that Dr. Swift was unusually scrupulous in his care to avoid giving any occasion for scandal. Now these are all the facts in the case up to 1710. Is there anything strange in them? Is there anything unaccountable in that this young lady should receive and appreciate the friendship of a man she had known from her earliest recollections, that she should value his careful and solicitous advice, and grow increasingly proud of his friendship as all England began to know and almost to fear him; and yet that she should never expect to marry him? It is

[1] There is good evidence to the contrary. During his brief stay at Kilroot, Swift, for lack of better employment, fell in love with a Miss Waring, sister of a college classmate. The lady declined his offer of marriage; but years after, when Swift's prospects were brightening, she seems to have repented her decision, and sought to induce Swift to renew his advances. Swift ended the acquaintance by a very sardonic letter in which he assures her that he cannot understand why she has changed her mind but that he will stand by his offer if she insists. In this letter he says, on the word of a Christian and a gentleman, that he has "never thought of being married to any but yourself."

When later, in 1704, a Dublin clergyman, one Tisdall, was minded to pay court to Stella he wrote to Swift. His letter is lost; but from the tone of Swift's answer it is evident that he regarded Swift rather as Stella's guardian than her lover. Swift in his reply says, "If my fortunes and humor served me to think of that state [i.e., of marriage] I should certainly . . . make your choice." The whole letter is such as it is inconceivable that one rival should write to another.

possible to make a sentimental romance out of the friendship of Jonathan Swift for Esther Johnson, but there is nothing in the facts of the case to warrant it; and to do so is to miss altogether the real beauty and tenderness of that friendship.

VI

The next ten years brought no further ecclesiastical preferment for Swift. A series of disappointments left him in 1710, as he was in 1701, Vicar of Laracor, with a congregation of rarely more than a dozen,—"most gentle and all simple," as he said,—and an income all told of about £250, upon which there were charges that ate up the greater part. To tell what he hoped to get, and had a right to hope to get, but lost,—that would be too long a story. The secretaryship to the embassy at Vienna, prebends at Windsor, Westminster, Canterbury, the deanery of Derry, the bishopric of Waterford,—they had all been dangled before his eyes and given to men who would bid higher for them in money or in service. His circle of acquaintance was widening. He was much in London, and by 1705 had met Addison, Steele, Philips, Congreve, Somers, Halifax, and almost all the great men of wit or politics. The Whig party seemed to have plenty of places and patronage for others, but nothing for him.

Meantime, his fame was growing. In 1704, *The Battle of the Books,* which had been handed about in manuscript for six years or more, was published, and in the same volume was included *The Tale of a Tub. The Tale of a Tub* is the most masterly prose satire in the English language. Its central story, in the magnitude of interests involved and in the homely economy of satiric material used, has no parallel; while in the introductions and digressions the eager satire, breaking away from the bounds of ordered narrative, sweeps into its hurrying stream almost all the complacent shams of truth, the little omnium of self-satisfied critics, the shallowness of a skeptical philosophy, the parade of a worth-

less science. The satire is bitter, indignant, but entirely honest. One feels in those early satires the first bright invention of early life, the assurance, the audacity of youth. One can feel, moreover, as he reads, the eager impatience of this proud youth, his triumphant scorn of folly and pretense, all the more bitter because it can find no other outlet. Chafing within the barriers that shut him out from the great struggle of life, this haughty young champion throws his glove defiantly over his prison wall full in the face of the heedless world. Dr. Johnson—who got queer wrinkles in his brain sometimes—doubted whether it could have been written by Swift; "there is in it," says he, "such a vigor of mind, such a swarm of thoughts, so much of nature and art and life." Precisely: and if these things are not to be found in the prose of Jonathan Swift, where in this world are they to be found? Like nearly all his works, *The Tale of a Tub* was published anonymously; but Swift was soon known to be the author. After that there could be no question as to his power.

And it seems certain that this satire—though not published till later—was written before Swift was thirty years of age. I don't wonder at his pathetic exclamation, when in later years as his mind was breaking, he turned over the leaves of this book, "Good God! what a genius I had when I wrote that book!"

As to the character of the man who would write such a book, there was then, and has been ever since, some difference of opinion. Many people thought the book irreverent; and many more affected to think so. It is often said that had Swift never written it, he would have won the bishop's lawn before he died. It may be admitted that the Juvenalian temper is not that best becoming the sacred office; but it must be urged that Swift believed himself writing in the interest of the truth he professed and the Church to which he belonged. No one who understands his character will doubt his statement that he conceived *The Tale of a Tub* fitted to serve the cause of morality and religion.

In point of fact, *The Tale of a Tub* probably had far

less to do with Swift's failure to get advancement in the Church than his doubtful politics. He had thus far called himself a Whig. His first political pamphlet, a rather academic analogy *Of the Dissensions in Athens and Rome* (1701), was a protest against the Tory attacks upon the Whig leaders, Somers and Halifax. His early education, the influence of Temple, the literary friendships of more recent years, all allied him with the Whig party. His own opinions on all matters pertaining to the State were in accord with those of the Whigs. He heartily accepted the Revolution settlement. He had no sympathy with the high Tory notions of royal prerogative and unconditional obedience which the logic of events had so completely refuted. But, on the other hand, he was growing more and more dissatisfied with the attitude of the Whigs toward the Church. It is always to be remembered as explaining Swift's conduct, that the interests of the Church as he conceived those interests, were to him, since the day he took orders, of supreme importance. The decay of religion in his day was matter of grave concern to all good men. And to Swift the only efficient religion was religion as by law established: the only remedy for the growing irreligion of the age was to strengthen the Establishment. But he saw that the Whigs were indifferent or hostile to the Establishment; they were over-indulgent to Dissenters. They opposed the Occasional Conformity Bill which would exclude Dissenters from civil affairs; they urged the abolition of the Tests in Ireland. Some of the prominent leaders, like Lord Wharton, were men of notoriously evil life. The Tory party, on the other hand, were distinctively the Church party. They professed unflinching zeal for its interests. Their rallying cry was "The Church is in danger." In these circumstances it is not strange that Swift found himself steadily receding from the Whigs. His position is clearly stated in a series of pamphlets issued in 1708: *On the Sacramental Test; A Project for the Advancement of Religion and the Reformation of Manners; Argument against Abolishing Christianity;* and *The Sentiments of a Church of England Man.* In the

Sentiments of a Church of England Man he expressly avows that in matters of the State he is a Whig, but in matters of the Church a Tory. That is, he is already in the position of an Independent, midway between the two parties. He was soon to take the next step, and place himself squarely on the Tory side.

VII

To understand the next chapter in Swift's life we must recall briefly the condition of parties in the winter of 1710-1711. During all of Anne's reign the fortune of parties depended largely upon the ups and downs of the great War of the Spanish Succession which broke out in 1701, just before Anne came to the throne. So far as England was concerned, it was a Whig war. King William welcomed it as a crowning opportunity to check the ambition of his life-long enemy, Louis XIV; and the Whig party supported the policy of their king. The Tories, on the other hand, from the first gave to the war only a reluctant and unwilling support. They said, truly enough, that England should have nothing to do with a quarrel over the Spanish crown. They were in a majority when the war began, and would have kept England out of the struggle had not Louis himself made it inevitable by acknowledging the claims of the Pretender—son of the deposed James II—to the English throne. But a successful war is always popular, and strengthens that party which favors it most. In the general elections of 1705, which followed the great victory of Blenheim, the Whigs returned very large majorities; by 1708 they were able to demand the exclusion of all Tory members from the cabinet. Ministry, Lords, and Commons were now under their control; it was the beginning of strictly party government.

Yet in spite of this success, the Whigs were nearing defeat. For the war was beginning to be unpopular. After eight years of victories it seemed no nearer ending than when it began. In fact there was a growing suspicion that

the Whigs did not wish it to end. For, by the device of the national debt, the burdens of the war seemed to fall almost exclusively on the landed class, to which most of the Tories belonged, while its rewards came almost exclusively to the moneyed class, to which most of the Whigs belonged. As soon as a town Whig could get a thousand pounds he invested it in the public securities upon which, of course, he paid no taxes, but from which he received a handsome interest out of the taxes paid by the land. Moreover, there was a growing doubt about the question of the succession which had been the original justification for the war. Queen Anne had evidently not long to live, and her children were all dead before her. In the event of her death without heirs, it had been provided that the crown should go to a granddaughter of her great-grandfather, the Electress Sophia, ruler of a petty German state, whom nobody knew or cared for; or, if she should die before Anne,—as she did,—then the crown was to go to her son, an even more insignificant person than his mother. It seemed a very long way to go for a King of England, and a very poor place to find one; and many people who were by no means Jacobites thought that the Pretender must come to the throne at last, and began to doubt the wisdom of fighting so long to keep him out. It was also, as has been said, a common accusation against the Whigs that they were careless of religion and willing to secure the adherence of the Dissenters and all the non-religious elements in the State at the cost of any sacrifice of the interests of the Church. This feeling was greatly intensified by an unfortunate mistake of the Whigs. A very declamatory London clergyman, Dr. Sacheverell, preached a sermon before the Lord Mayor, in November, 1709, on what he chose to call the perils to the Church from false brethren, in the course of which he took occasion to arraign Whig doctrines and Whig leaders in very intemperate language. His declamation would have done no harm; but in an evil hour the ministry resolved to impeach him. This enabled the foolish parson to pose as a martyr, and fanned the Tory zeal for the Church into a

flame at once. The ladies had Sacheverell's picture in their prayer books and on their fans: and when the Doctor went into the country after his trial his journey was a kind of triumph that set the church bells ringing half over England.

All this augured ill for the Whigs. But their defeat was assured when the Queen changed her favorite. Queen Anne was a flaccid creature, who, as Swift said, "never had a stock of amity sufficient for more than one person at a time." Through her reign thus far she had been under the control of her intimate friend, the imperious Duchess of Marlborough. But it finally began to soak into Queen Anne's mind that she was being managed; and she didn't like it. She transferred her favor from the Duchess to a waiting woman of the Duchess, Abigail Hill, afterwards Mrs. Masham, who was a distant relative of the Tory leader, Robert Harley. And thus, through Abigail Hill, the Tories found means to call the attention of the Queen to the dissatisfied condition of the country, and to persuade her that she might now safely dismiss her Whig ministers, dissolve parliament, and try the chances of a general election. Their expectations were realized. During the late summer and early autumn of 1710 the Queen dismissed her Whig ministers, one after another, and called to the head of affairs Robert Harley and young Henry St. John,—soon to be made Viscount Bolingbroke. Parliament was dissolved at the end of September and the elections which immediately followed brought up an overwhelming Tory majority. And to crown all, next year Anne created twelve new Tory peers at a stroke, thus swamping the Whig majority in the Lords. It was one of the most sweeping and dramatic changes in English political history.

VIII

Just at this stirring period Swift came over to England. He was charged with a commission from his archbishop to secure if possible for the Irish clergy that remission of the first fruits and tenths which had already been granted to the

English Church. Once before he had been in London on the same errand. On that visit, which lasted during the whole of the year 1708, his repeated efforts had been unsuccessful; and his failure had strengthened his conviction that no favors for the church could ever be obtained from the Whigs. He now reached London, September 7, 1710, a fortnight before the dissolution of Parliament. Godolphin, the Whig Lord Treasurer, who had lost his place a month before, received him very coolly; but the most of his Whig friends met him with a profusion of welcome that showed plainly enough their fear of losing him. "Ravished to see me," says he, "and would lay hold on me as a twig while they are drowning." In the first week in October he lays his Irish church business before Harley, and is received with a consideration in marked contrast with the coldness of Godolphin. A little later he dines with Mr. St. John. He stands "ten times better with the new people," he writes to Stella, than ever he did with the old; "forty times more caressed." With his old literary friends in the Whig camp, Addison, Steele, Philips, Halifax, he is still intimate; but he is making new ones on the other side. Bishop Atterbury, genial Doctor Arbuthnot, Mr. Pope, the new poet,—they are all glad to have the honor of his acquaintance. By the middle of November he has made up his mind. He will give his hearty support to the new ministry.

"He ratted," says Macaulay. "Without a pretence of principle," says Lord Stanhope, "deserting his cause for no better reason than that he thought it in danger." Not at all. On the contrary, the party to which he now gave his allegiance professed—and Swift believed sincerely professed—to represent those principles he held most firmly. It was popular anxiety for the interests of the Church, more than any other cause, that had brought them into power. Nor, on the other hand, was Swift in any way officially committed to the Whigs. His association had chiefly been with them hitherto, but he had already protested against their attitude toward the Church, and was well known to be dissatisfied with them. In fact, while some of Swift's political writing is

very bitter, he was never an extreme partisan. In the *Sentiments of a Church of England Man* he protests against that slavish temper which enters into a party as into an order of friars, and throughout his writings he frequently repeats this protest. Like Harley, he would have preferred a government made up from the liberal men of both parties and representing all the interests of the nation. But he soon saw, as Harley did, that ministerial action could be efficient only when backed by a compact party organization. At all events, it was now only the Tory party that could advance the measures he had most at heart; there was, then, no reason why he should not work with them.

Doubtless personal motives had much to do with his action. He was not absolutely disinterested. Few patriots are. He cared little for titles or empty rank. These things were always the objects of his satire; and his life did not belie his satire. Still less did he care for money. No man ever had a cleaner pair of hands than Jonathan Swift. When Harley once sent him a small sum of money as a present and not at all as a bribe, Swift sent it back indignantly, and refused to enter Harley's doors again until the minister had apologized. But he did covet some place in which he might show what stuff there was in him. He was forty-three years old. Hitherto he had been banished to a lonesome corner of Ireland. Now, conscious of great ability, he was ambitious of some opportunity for its exercise,—assuredly the noblest kind of ambition. It was power he wanted. And he got it. For the next three years he was not only incomparably the ablest writer on the Tory side, but he was also the intimate friend and adviser of the Tory ministers.

On November 2, 1710, Swift assumed control of the *Examiner,* a weekly journal established a little while before to explain and defend Tory principles. Swift made the *Examiner* the organ of that moderate Tory policy which Harley approved. His object was to write down the Whigs, moderate the zeal of the extreme Tories, and to unite all liberal men in support of the Church and the landed interests, and in opposition to the war. His papers, therefore, ex-

cepting a few that attack the Whig leaders,—especially Wharton and Marlborough,—are conciliatory and persuasive in tone. And they are admirably reasoned; with such simplicity of statement and such apparent candor that their very sophistry seems convincing. The *Examiner* is our first example of political journalism that rises to the level of permanent literature.

In the autumn of 1711 Swift attempted an even more difficult task. The Tory ministry had taken office pledged to end the war. But to end the war satisfactorily seemed almost impossible. Any proposition looking toward peace produced bitter clamor from the Whigs. To make peace now, they said, would be to surrender the fruits of ten glorious years of victory. It would be perfidy, also, to England's allies. Moreover, they urged, the failing health of the Queen made the danger from the Pretender more imminent; and they spread the rumor—for which there was doubtless some foundation—that the ministry were willing to admit the claim of the Pretender in return for some concessions from France. In these difficulties, the ministers again had recourse to Swift. His famous pamphlet, *The Conduct of the Allies,* fairly convinced thousands of Englishmen that they had been fighting an expensive and bloody war to satisfy the ambition of the Emperor and to fill the pockets of the Dutch, and that they were now asked to prolong that war still further merely to glut the greed of that moneyed class who were fattening on the bankruptcy of the nation. Seldom has a political pamphlet had such immediate effect. The first edition was exhausted in three days, the second in five hours, and in two months over eleven thousand copies had been sold. Swift's array of fact and historical precedent was convincing to the student of politics, while the vigor and simplicity of his style and his wealth of homely illustration appealed to the crowd. It is hardly too much to say that this pamphlet stopped the war. A month after its issue the ministers dared to dismiss Marlborough; and, though the negotiations dragged on through another year, peace was now assured.

Language to Swift was simply the vehicle of thought. No English writing better combines the three virtues of clearness, simplicity, vigor. "Proper words in proper places,"[1] is his curt definition of style. Admiration for style apart from the meaning beneath it he would have considered a mark of mere literary preciosity,—as it usually is. It is true indeed that the greatest masters of modern prose have at command felicities of arrangement and cadence and a subtle use of the suggestive power of words, by means of which they can convey their thought not only with all its flexures of meaning but with all its delicate nimbus of emotion. But Swift needed no such niceties, for there was no subtlety or delicacy in his nature. Literary elaboration always seemed to him to imply artifice or pedantry. He was by no means one of the mob of gentlemen who write with ease; but all his efforts were directed to secure absolute clearness of thought before he wrote at all. Feeble and ambiguous writing comes, he knew, not so much from lack of skill as from faintness and indecision in thinking. As he says in comment upon his definition of style, "When a man's thoughts are clear, the properest words will generally offer themselves first, and his own judgment will direct him in what order to place them." His own word seems always that spontaneous one that leaps first to the lips; but it is always the "properest" word. He is never feeling about uncertainly for his phrase. His diction is homely to the last degree; he has no hesitation in walking over the rules of the rhetorician, and he occasionally slips in his grammar; but you are never at a loss for his precise meaning. And there is a surprising vigor in his style. Simplicity with some writers means little more than meagerness; their style is simple because they have but little to say. But there was an intense, forthright quality in the action of Swift's mind that rolls a volume of plain thought upon you with amazing ease and rapidity. Imagination, too, is never long absent from his writing. In truth Swift's imagination, though it dwelt mostly among familiar things, was richer than that of any of his contemporaries.

[1] *Letter to a Young Clergyman,* Works, Vol. VIII, p. 205.

It does not merely furnish the material for his allegories; it sprinkles his page thickly with homely metaphor and example, and it is constantly giving unexpected poignancy to some familiar phrase. Yet when all is said, the highest praise of Swift's style is its absolute fidelity to Swift's personality. Nobody has been able to impress himself more vigorously upon his readers. His writing is all alike. He has no reserved literary manner. Books, pamphlets, letters, sermons, private journals,—they are all Jonathan Swift speaking right on.

Swift's literary fame will rest upon two kinds of work in which he has never been surpassed, the political tract—either in periodical or in pamphlet form—and the allegorical satire. In that age of pamphlets, when the press probably exerted more political influence than ever before or since, Swift's work is perhaps the only political writing that has much permanent literary value. And even of his work —as of all party writing—it may be said that the qualities that made it effective at the time tended to diminish its lasting interest. Aiming at immediate results, Swift seldom lifts his subject out of the atmosphere of temporary party strife, as Burke did, into the region of general principles. Indeed it was more true of Swift's political work than of Burke's that (he)

> To party gave up what was meant for mankind.

It has been further objected to some of Swift's political writing that it lacks lightness and vivacity. Mr. Lane-Poole[1] thinks that "no modern leader-writer, however common-place, would write such heavy stuff" as the Examiners now. Well, perhaps not. The modern editorial is written to be read while you are swallowing the morning coffee or balancing yourself on one leg in a crowded railway car. It must not mean much, as it must reduce the task of thinking to a minimum. Moreover, it is written as a pure matter of business, by men who may vote in the afternoon for the

[1] *Swift's Prose Writings*, Preface, p. xxv.

candidate they have abused in the morning. But Swift was more earnest than that. He wrote to men who thought, and he was determined to convince them. His papers continue to interest simply because he put so much of himself into them. The homely sense, the inimitable irony, the energy of conviction, the triumphant vigor of statement,—these hold our attention though we have ceased to care for the question that called them into action. Swift was the prince of controversialists. He could be extremely rancorous when rancor would tell most; but he knew how also to give his most dogmatic statements an air of candor, and his argument, even when sophistical, has a resistless plausibility. The soundness of his reasoning cannot be questioned. He lacked only the crowning gift of persuasiveness. He really had no notion of moving men save by convincing or compelling them. There is an arrogant tone in his argument always, and he makes his conclusions so clear that he has nothing but contempt for those who dare to question them. But for the reader of to-day, who does not care about the conclusion and has no partisan prejudices to be offended, this energetic self-assurance only deepens that impression of personality which is always the secret of Swift's power.

But it was not by his pen only that Swift aided the ministry. He himself took more satisfaction in his personal intimacy with them and the value they placed upon his counsel. His pride may exaggerate this influence somewhat; but there can be little doubt that for two years no man outside the ministry had so much to do with the most important measures of state. For once his pride of power had full swing. He was not the man to bear his honors meekly. "I am proud enough in the drawing-room to make all the lords come up to me," he says frankly to Stella in the *Journal;* "one passes half an hour pleasantly enough." 'I said the Duke of Buckingham must make the first advances to me, not I to him.' Doubtless there is a touch of cynical swagger in the demeanor of this Irish priest, and he asserts his supremacy with a little too much bravado. Yet there must have been a singular fascination in the personality of Swift. We think

of him most often to-day as he was in his latest years, when disease and misanthropy had written themselves deeply into his face and out of his eyes looked the wild gloomy spirit of his approaching doom. But in those days when he was at his best, his face was singularly attractive, his eyes Pope described as "azure as the heavens," and his mobile features quivered with the intensity of his nature. Certain it is that many of the best men—and many of the best and brightest women—found a compelling charm in his companionship. The best that society had to give was free to him. Years before Addison had characterized him as the most agreeable companion and the truest friend as well as the greatest genius of the age; and the group of Tory men of wit and learning that now drew in about him,—Arbuthnot, Gay, Prior, Parnell, Pope, Oxford, Bolingbroke, Peterborough, Atterbury,—all looked up to him as the center of their brilliant circle. His keen satiric glance pierced through all the pretense and convention of society; but his temper, though occasionally bitter, was not yet soured, and a dash of satire gave pungency and sparkle to his conversation. For he was an admirable talker. He knew how to give some intellectual charm to the conversation of any company where he was; while his sarcastic essays *On Polite Conversation* show how he despised the feeble flow of commonplace and inanities that often passed for conversation in what called itself good society. He found time from the urgency of business to extend his own liberal studies and to aid other people in theirs; and he used his great influence with the ministry to secure a generous patronage of literature. The only pamphlet he ever published over his own name—*A Proposal for Ascertaining the English Tongue*—was a letter to Harley proposing a kind of academy to purify our language from its increasing corruptions and to fix its grammar and vocabulary. He was the moving spirit in that famous Brothers' Club which aimed to temper politics with letters, and in which, for the first time in our history, men of letters met on a perfect equality with men of state. And a little later, it was Swift who founded that still more

famous Scriblerus Club out of which came, in time, *The History of John Bull, The Dunciad,* and *Gulliver's Travels.*

But nothing Swift did or wrote in those years of his stay in London is of so much interest to posterity as that singular document which was not meant for posterity at all, the *Journal to Stella.* When he landed in England, September 2, 1710, Swift began at Chester a journal letter to Esther Johnson; he continued it till the 6th of June, 1713, when he was at Chester again on his way back to Ireland. This is probably the most remarkable bit of autobiography in the language. It is of great importance as a record of political change during those eventful years, as a vivid picture of social conditions in London; but its chief interest consists in its revelation of the inmost heart of the writer. Swift's daily life in its routine, his plans and fears, his friendships and aversions, his pride at success and his anger at defeat, even his follies and weaknesses, his ailments of body and of temper,—they are all poured out absolutely without reserve or consciousness. Few men dare to be so frank even with themselves as this man is before the woman he has left at home in Ireland. But most amazing is his tenderness for her, the pathetic solicitude on every page. This is a side of Swift's nature that, were it not for the *Journal,* we could hardly have guessed. He frequently drops into that "little language" which is obviously the broken utterance of her childhood that he had never forgotten. He writes always and everything. He snatches a few moments when he comes home weary at night from Mr. Harley's council-chamber or Mrs. Masham's levee; he writes abed in the morning, when that scoundrel Patrick, if for a wonder he isn't drunk, is laying the fire and the room is a-warming. He tells her how his affairs are going, how he has dined with Mr. St. John and met Mat. Prior, how Mr. Addison's paper gets on, or more imaginary adventures,—how he met the Queen yesterday, "and she made me a courtesy in a familiar way, 'How de do, How de do, How does M. D. in Ireland' and I considered she was only a queen and so excused her"; how he has lodgings in Bury

Street at eight shillings a week, plaguy dear—he tells her everything just as it comes into his head, and when the big sheet is full, he folds it over—"faith, 'tis a whole treatise" —and he seals it, and directs it, and then—he begins another. Nothing can be conceived more true and tender. There is an inexpressible kindness in it, all the more impressive in such a rudely imperious nature, a sort of leonine and shaggy gentleness.

And it would seem that the *Journal* ought to be conclusive as to the nature of the relation between Swift and Esther Johnson. One thing is certain: that relation must have been determined and perfectly understood on both sides before the *Journal* could have been written. And surely there can be no mistaking the temper in which it is written—intimate, playful, tender, solicitous, but perfectly passionless. This is not the love of a husband to his wife, or of a lover to his mistress. It is the wise, gentle, almost paternal affection of a guardian or an elder brother. It is Prospero to Miranda. There is not a word in the *Journal* that Stella could have mistaken for any other affection or construed into any promise or expectation of marriage.

After more than a year of tedious negotiation the Treaty of Utrecht was finally signed, April, 1713. Swift felt that it was now time for him to retire from the struggle of politics. He was the more ready to do so because he foresaw the inevitable break-up of the Tory party. Its two leaders had never been fitted to work together, and were now growing more openly hostile to each other. Harley (who had been made Lord Oxford) was essentially a weak and hesitating man, who preferred a cautious and moderate policy principally because he never felt sure of his way. Bolingbroke, on the contrary, was bold to rashness, a brilliant but not a safe leader, who found the indecision and slowness of his colleague intolerable. There were corresponding divisions in the party. The extreme Tories chafed at the hesitation of the ministry and clamored for sweeping partisan measures. The Moderates, or "Whimsicals" as they were called, were suspicious of Jacobite plans and

inclined to an alliance with the Whigs. During the previous year, 1712, Swift had done his best to compose these differences. His two most important pamphlets of that year were addressed, one to the extreme Tories, *A Letter to the October Club,* in which he ingeniously defends the moderation of the ministry, and the other to the most moderate Tories, *A Letter to a Whig Lord,* in which he tries to show that even a moderate Whig, if he be loyal, is bound at that juncture to support the Queen and her ministry. But the effort had little success. The spirit of faction was increasing; the differences between the ministers were widening. Swift began to tire of it all. Yet to go back to Laracor without some ecclesiastical preferment in recognition of his services would hardly be consistent with self-respect. He could not allow himself to be called a tool that ministers had dropped when they could no longer use. As he wrote to Stella, "impertinent people would condole with me." He had never been willing to ask preferment for himself, often as he had done so for others. He would not now; but he gave Harley to understand that if anything were intended for him, it must be conferred at once. At the end of April he was appointed to the deanery of St. Patrick's, Dublin. The whole affair was little to his liking. It had been arranged only after vexatious difficulties and delays. Harley had been, as usual, vacillating and inefficient. A vacancy had been made only by promoting the incumbent of St. Patrick's to a bishop's chair that Swift felt might have been more justly given to himself; but the Queen refused to consider him for a bishopric. He hoped that the ministry might keep him in England; St. Patrick's meant banishment for the rest of his life, from his most intimate friends to a country he hated. But Swift swallowed his disappointment,—that had now become his habit,—and went over to be installed.

He had hardly reached Dublin, however, before he was recalled to reconcile if possible the jarring ministers. "We want you extremely," wrote Harley's secretary, Erasmus Lewis. Swift delayed a little, but at the first of September

he returned, to spend one more winter in London. During this winter he was involved in a controversy with his old friend, Steele. Just before he went over to Dublin he had been greatly provoked by an unjust and blundering allusion to himself in Steele's *Guardian;* and now, when Steele attacked the ministry for not carrying out the terms of the peace, Swift replied in two pamphlets in which Steele is punished unmercifully. These pamphlets, *The Importance of the "Guardian"* and *The Public Spirit of the Whigs,* are examples, the one of Swift's most scathing sarcasm, the other of his fiercest scorn. But in the more important matter of bringing the ministers together and healing the divisions in the party, he could do nothing. He could not help seeing that Oxford, to whom he had always been the more attached, baffled by the difficulties of his position, was sinking into utter helplessness. Bolingbroke was getting the government into his own hands, and making ready to turn it over to the Pretender as soon as the Queen should die. Of these Jacobite schemes, however, it is certain that Swift had no knowledge. Indeed the suspicion that there were some matters on which the ministry did not now take him into their confidence, was one cause of his vexation. In the spring of 1714 he wrote an admirable tract, *Free Thoughts on the Present State of Affairs,* in which he once more urged a temperate and comprehensive policy; but Bolingbroke, to whom the manuscript was submitted, made such changes in it that Swift refused to print it. In May, wearied out and hopeless, he withdrew into the country for a little rest with an old school-fellow at Letcombe. While he was there the crisis came. Oxford was dismissed five days before the death of the Queen, and Bolingbroke for the moment supposed himself secure in his plans. But he was outplayed by the Whigs in the very last move of his game. Anne was induced to place the Lord Treasurer's staff in the hands of the Earl of Shrewsbury on Thursday afternoon; on Sunday morning, August 1, she died, and King George I was proclaimed. "What a world is this, and how does Fortune banter us!" wrote Bolingbroke to Swift

on Monday. Within a month Harley was in the Tower, and Bolingbroke in exile; the Tory party was dissolved. Swift hurried up to London to see all his old friends once more at the Scriblerus Club, and then he went over to Dublin. Only twice in the thirty years of life that remained to him was he ever in England again. The most brilliant chapter in his life was closed.

IX

As far as literary or political effort is concerned, the next six years of the life of Swift are a blank. He had no heart for further public work. His party was ruined. He was cut off from the companionship of all congenial friends, and set among strangers who were indifferent or hostile. At his appointment to St. Patrick's, the Archbishop of Dublin had written him a very chilly letter hinting that perhaps the best thing Swift could do in his office was to put a spire on the cathedral, "an ornament," said the Archbishop, "much admired in these parts." Even the mob was against him; on the morning of his installation he had found tacked upon the door of his cathedral some doggerel verses:

> Look down, St. Patrick, look, we pray,
> On this thy church and steeple;
> Convert the dean on this great day,
> Or else—God help the people!

Under the pressure of the last three years his health had been breaking, and the fits of deafness and giddiness he had suffered from childhood grew more frequent and severe. From this time his moody and misanthropic temper gained upon him.

And besides all this, there was one sore anxiety which he could not reveal even to his nearest friends. Among the many doors opened to Swift during his London life was that of a Mrs. Vanhomrigh, a widow with two daughters. Her house in Bury Street was near Swift's lodgings; he often dined there, and found easy comfort and good com-

pany, without the pretension and stiff conventionalities that he hated. When he took lodgings out at Chelsea for his health, he used to leave his gown and wig there over night and call for them when he came in of a morning. Whether thrifty Mrs. Van had any designs in making her house so convenient for the great Dr. Swift, I'm sure I don't know, but he was certainly often there, and the family soon became his intimate friends. The elder of the two daughters, Miss Hester Vanhomrigh, was nineteen years of age when Swift first met her. She was not a beauty; but she had what Swift always liked better than beauty, quick wit and a curious mind. Swift gave her advice about her reading, and for a time seems to have been a kind of teacher for her. The ignorance and frivolity of young ladies in his day was a frequent matter of sarcastic comment with him, and whenever he saw quick parts and love of study in any lady of his acquaintance he was always ready to encourage them. The story of Swift's further acquaintance with Hester Vanhomrigh has been greatly elaborated by the romantic imagination of the biographers; but all we really know of it is drawn from some letters that Miss Vanhomrigh wrote and some verses that Swift wrote.[1] When, in 1713, the acquaintance took a new, and to Swift a most surprising turn, he wrote an account of it in poetic form, under the title, *Cadenus and Vanessa,*—that is, Decanus, or the Dean, and Essa Van. These verses he sent Miss Vanhomrigh, evidently as a kind of explanation meant for her only. He hoped she would see the embarrassment in which she had placed him, and would so change her conduct as to relieve him from it.[2] We learn from Swift's verses that his pupil one day astounded him by a declaration of love; and that he, in surprise and mortification, was utterly at a loss what to

[1] Our sources of information are now somewhat enlarged by the recently published *Vanessa and her Correspondance with Jonathan Swift,* ed., with an Introduction, by A. Martin Freeman (Boston, Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1921). [L. B. G.]

[2] The *Cadenus and Vanessa* was revised in 1719, and it is this revised version that has come down to us. The later form contains some passages that can apply only to a later stage of the acquaintance.

do or say. From this time, for about ten years, poor Miss Vanhomrigh's hopeless passion was the burden of his life, half vexation, half grief. He could not return it; he could not shake it off. When he came over to Dublin in 1714 she followed him with letters. Her mother was now dead, and she besought his advice and assistance. He tried to write her merely as a friend; she made it impossible. He tried not to write her at all; she sent him letters of passionate entreaty for a word. She came over to Ireland, and, in spite of his expostulations resided for a time in Dublin. He tried —rather foolishly—to marry her to somebody else. He tried to enlist her interest in matters of business or of letters. But nothing could avail. After a short residence in Dublin, she retired with her sister to a small estate at Celbridge. She was sinking under pulmonary disease, aggravated perhaps by her hopeless passion, and in 1723 she died. One can feel nothing but pity for either of the characters in this pathetic story. Surely Swift can be charged with nothing worse than pardonable blindness. A bachelor of forty-five deeply immersed in the affairs of Europe could hardly be expected to detect the first symptoms of such a fatal attachment; and there is not a particle of evidence to show that he selfishly dallied with that affection, or did anything to encourage it after it had once been disclosed to him. It is easy to say that he should have broken the acquaintance off at once and forever; but Vanessa's repeated requests for his assistance as well as his affection clearly made it difficult to do so without seeming cruelty. His conduct may have been unwise; but it was kindly meant.

Vanessa's passion must almost certainly have been known to Stella;[1] but what were her feelings in the matter we have no means of telling, though it may not be difficult to conjecture. It has usually been believed that her jealousy was so far excited that, in 1716, she insisted on a marriage with the dean. Nearly all the early biographers accept this story of Swift's marriage with Stella, though it is admitted

[1] Swift speaks of Mrs. Vanhomrigh and her family no less than seventy-nine times in the *Journal*.

that they never saw each other save in the presence of a third person, the marriage was never publicly owned, and was unknown to most of Swift's nearest friends. It is highly improbable that any such marriage ever took place. The evidence cannot be recited here. Suffice it to say that the meager, conflicting, and second-hand testimony usually cited cannot be accepted as proof of a marriage so purposeless, so utterly inconsistent with the spirit of that long friendship, so contrary to the awful sincerity of the dean himself. Surely if Swift was married to Esther Johnson in 1716 his conduct in concealing it from Hester Vanhomrigh was something more than imprudent.

But if it is admitted that Swift's cynical misanthropy grew upon him in these years, it should also be remembered that during all his Dublin residence he performed the duties of his clerical office with punctilious fidelity. Nay, he did much more than that. His personal charities were careful and abundant. A third of his income he always set aside for benevolence. "He gave away five pounds," said Delany, "easier than most men give five shillings, and I never saw poor so carefully and conscientiously attended to as those of his parish always were." But he was always careful that his charity should not foster idleness or beggary. He knew that if any people needed to be taught the lesson of thrift and small economy it was that shiftless Irish people.

One gets glimpses, now and then, in these later years, of his relations with his poor people, of his grim humor, with solid wisdom and sometimes a gleam of tenderness underneath it. He called on a poor farmer one day, who received him in his Sunday best, his wife in silk and ribbons and his gawky boy in a brand new lace cap. "Ah, Mr. Reilly," said the dean, "I'd like to go out and ride over your estate." "Estate, is it?" said the puzzled farmer. "Deil a foot o' land belongs to me or any of my generation."—"Ah, so, we'll stay in then; but when am I to see Mrs. Reilly?" "Mrs. Reilly, please your reverence, don't you see her there before ye?" "That, Mrs. Reilly, impossible! I've heard Mrs. Reilly was a very prudent woman, and I'm sure she'd never

dress herself out in silk and ornaments fit only for ladies of fashion." When the good lady, taking this rather broad hint, came in a few moments later, Swift met her with "Ah, ah, indeed, Mrs. Reilly, I'm heartily glad to see you; this husband of yours tried to palm off a fine lady on me for you, but I wasn't to be taken in so." He had grabbed the youngster's cap off and torn it to bits; but on going away he gave him back the rags in a five-pound note.

He used to have some wretched old woman in almost every dirty lane to whom he was accustomed to carry frequent aid in person, but he always insisted that they should have some employment; one of them knitted the dean's stockings, and another mended them. Vexed by the increasing pauperism about him, he invented a plan by which the deserving poor of his parish could be designated for assistance and the sturdy beggars set at work. The first five hundred pounds he saved he set apart as a loan fund to aid poor Irish tradesmen in their efforts to struggle into business. He helped more than two hundred families from this fund. It is no wonder that little by little the Irish people began to find him the truest of friends, even before his famous writings in their behalf. One likes to remember his generosity, his kindness, his faithfulness in duty, during those closing years; one likes to remember the tribute of loyal reverence and admiration paid him by a host of humble people when his great friends were dropping away.

In his own household he was a strict but just master, and his servants soon found him a generous one too. He gathered them for daily prayers as regularly as if it were a cathedral service; but so quietly that visitors were in his house for weeks without knowing it. He insisted on obedience, but almost always tempered the severity of his commands with a cynical humor under which they soon learned to see not only good sense but good nature; and he seldom objected to a bit of Irish impudence if it was seasoned with wit.

While on a journey once with two servants, the butler on being bidden to clean his master's boots in the morning

growled that they'd be dirty again soon enough if he did clean them. "Ah, sir," said Swift, "have you had your breakfast yet?" "No, that I haven't at all." "Well, I have," said Swift, "and it makes no difference with you, you'll be hungry again soon enough, if you do eat; so we'll start on,"—and off they went. A mile on the road, a stranger met them with the inquiry where they were going. "Begorra," said the hungry butler, "we're goin' to heaven, for the dean he's a-praying and I'm a-fasting." Swift gave the man a half crown for his wit, and they stopped at the next inn for breakfast. Such stories, a multitude of which have gathered about the private life of the dean, are certainly trifles; but they show that underneath his rough exterior and crabbed eccentricities of manner, there was a man's heart, just and not unkindly, and that plain people who had no humbug about them could find it easily enough.

X

When Swift, in 1721, took up the pen that had lain seven years idle, it was in the cause of Ireland. The wretchedness of Ireland in the first half of the last century as it stands recorded on the temperate pages of modern historians seems incredible.[1] Conquered again and again, the island had at last been subdued. The Irish had no other notion of protest than armed resistance; and armed resistance was now hopeless. After the revolt of 1689 had been put down, the country was placed under that Penal Code which, whether it was a crime or a blunder, must be remembered as the disgrace of English legislation. But atrocious as were these laws against the Roman Catholics, they had less to do with the misery of Ireland than England's commercial tyranny. England was not very wise or generous in the treatment of any of her dependencies in the eighteenth century; and she regarded none with such contempt and jealousy. As one form after another of Irish industry had risen into prominence, between 1660 and 1700, with cruel

[1] See, for example, Lecky's *England in the Eighteenth Century*, Ch. VII.

ingenuity it was crushed by commercial legislation of unexampled severity. Ireland was the green pasture land of Europe; England now forbade the export of her cattle[1] and ruined her graziers at a stroke. They turned their pastures into sheep-walks and began to manufacture the wool. This industry promised in twenty years to make Ireland wealthy; England forbade all exports of Irish woolens,[2] crushed the growing industry, and drove a large population into utter poverty. By other acts Ireland was forbidden to export anything to the colonies or import anything from them, unless by way of England. All commerce and all industry were blasted. The mass of the Irish people, too improvident by nature, were brought to the verge of beggary. And what was even worse, the whole people were sunk in apathy. The national spirit seemed broken. Self-government they had none. There was, to be sure, an Irish parliament; but it had no independence, and could pass only such acts as had first been approved in England. Almost every office in the Irish government, from the Viceroy down, was filled by Englishmen sent over from London, who were greedy for the meager spoil of a wasted country. Most of them never resided in Ireland, and there were many who landed at Ringsend on Saturday night, qualified for office by taking the sacrament on Sunday, took the oaths Monday, and sailed back to England Tuesday to draw their salaries without seeing Ireland again for the year. In the established Church, things were not much better. With the hatred of Roman Catholics on the one side and the jealousy of Presbyterians on the other, it would have had a hard struggle if wisely governed; but it was not wisely governed. Its bishops usually aimed to smother any national feeling and make Ireland and the Irish church the servile dependents of England—and to provide handsomely for their own greed. Said Swift bitterly, "Excellent moral men have been selected . . . [in England to govern the church]. But it unfortunately has uniformly happened that as these

[1] By the Acts of 1665 and 1680.
[2] By the Act of 1699.

worthy divines crossed Hounslow Heath on their road to Ireland to take possession of their bishoprics they have been regularly robbed and murdered by the highwaymen frequenting that common, who seize upon their robes and patents, come over to Ireland, and are consecrated bishops in their stead." Unusual misrule and corruption, bare-legged beggary, and a carnival of vulgar crime,—that was the state of Ireland.

Swift looked on in silence for seven years. The spectacle of Irish degradation filled him with mingled contempt and indignation. He knew that the ills of Ireland were largely due to English misgovernment; and it seemed to him that those ills were rapidly growing intolerable under the venal administration of Walpole. At last when in 1720 some measures of the Whigs showed anew their determination to keep both the Irish church and the Irish people in slavish dependence upon England, Swift could contain his anger no longer. In a pamphlet, *A Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture,* he exhorts the Irish people to refuse all English imports. Burn everything that comes from England, he says—except the coals and the people. Live on your own resources. In this first pamphlet of the Irish controversy Swift's style is, if possible, more terse and vigorous than ever, his irony more keen, and there is a note of indignant pity not previously heard in his writing. But his great opportunity came three years later.

In 1722 the English government granted to one William Wood a patent for the coinage of copper for Ireland. There was undoubtedly a need of small coin in Ireland; but the amount named in the patent, £108,000, was vastly in excess of the need. The patent had been obtained only by the most notorious jobbery. Wood paid £10,000 in one bribe into the capacious lap of the Duchess of Kendal,—the frowsy mistress of George I,—and this was only one of a series of blackmail payments which various officials had to levy on the transaction. And what to Swift was worst of all, the whole affair had been managed in England, in utter indifference to the wishes of the Irish people, and without

so much as consulting the Irish Viceroy, Privy Council, or Parliament. But when, next year, Wood attempted to introduce his copper, he met with unexpected opposition. The Irish Parliament, for a wonder, found spirit to protest, and the popular indignation slowly grew to such a pitch that, in the summer of 1724, the English government was forced to appoint a committee of inquiry upon the coinage. It was now that Swift saw his opportunity. It was generally believed—and with good reason—that Wood's coins were below their professed value. Swift seized upon this belief as the readiest instrument of agitation. His real object was to arouse the indignation of the Irish people against an imposition upon their rights; but he knew this could not be done by a discussion of constitutional grievances. Tell your neighbor a thief is at his pocket-book if you wish him to stir. Swift addressed directly to the people a letter, printed in the cheapest manner, couched in the homely phrases of a tradesman, and signed *M. B. Drapier*. In this letter, by all those arts of which he was so consummate a master, he urges the tradespeople and laborers to refuse Wood's copper. Assuming it to be a fact that the coin is under value, he gravely drives that fact into all sorts of humorous exaggerations and inference. Shrewd wit, biting irony, telling illustration, bits of sound economic doctrine are all conveyed in a style so simple that thousands who couldn't read a word of it could understand every word when it was read to them. When the report of the Committee was published weakly defending the patent, the Drapier issued in quick succession two more letters heaping infinite ridicule upon the pretended vindication of Wood, and calling upon the gentry to unite with the people in indignant protest against this attempt to enslave a free nation in order to enrich a scheming English ironmonger. Two months later when popular feeling was at its height, Swift sought to turn it to lasting account by his noble Fourth Letter, *To the Whole People of Ireland*. Here he leaves all little grievances aside. The great wrong in this coinage is that it was forced upon Ireland without the knowledge or

consent of her government. Passing from the matter of the coin altogether, he strikes boldly against the English doctrine of the dependence of Ireland. Ireland is a free nation, of coördinate rights with England under the British crown. As such she deserves and must have the same rights of self-government as England enjoys, for (and here his phrase strangely resembles that of the American colonists half a century later) "government without the consent of the governed is the very definition of slavery."

A storm of agitation followed. The government chose to consider the pamphlet seditious, and offered a reward of £300 for information of the author. Everybody knew perfectly well who the author was; but no one dreamed of informing. The printer was arrested; but the grand jury persistently refused to find a bill against him. Every tavern had its Drapier's sign. Wood was derided in street ballads, and burned in effigy every night. The English government were powerless in the face of this new kind of Irish opposition, which took the form not of midnight murder and petty rebellion, but of constitutional agitation. Wood's patent was withdrawn. It is not easy to overestimate the influence of this victory. It marks an era in Irish politics. From that time, as Mr. Lecky says, "rebellion has been an anachronism and a mistake. The age of Grattan and O'Connell had begun."

XI

During the months of the Drapier agitation Swift was contemplating a visit to his old friends in London. He had kept up his correspondence with several of them,—there is no more delightful bundle of letters in the language than those that passed between these friends in the years 1714 to 1726,—and of late they had been especially urgent to see his face once more. Swift hesitated. He dreaded a meeting that must have seemed to those men like a satire on human ambition; he dreaded still more, as he wrote a friend, the inevitable return "to this enslaved country where I am

condemned to pass my existence." But he went at last. In 1726 the old Scriblerus Club met again, "like mariners after a storm" as Arbuthnot said, and talked over the literary plans they had amused themselves with twelve years before. The circle had been broken by the deaths of Harley and of Prior; Atterbury was in exile; but the others were there, Bolingbroke, Pope, Arbuthnot, Gay, Peterborough, Bathurst. In the days of Queen Anne they had projected a kind of philosophic satire, to be done between them, and published as the Memoirs of the Club. The plan had been abandoned; but it probably furnished the original motive for two great satires. In 1726, Pope was already at work upon *The Dunciad;* and Swift brought with him to London the manuscript of *Gulliver's Travels*. Some sketch of it had probably been formed before he left London in 1714; at all events he had certainly been writing upon it, at odd hours, for five or six years. *Gulliver* was read over the tables of the Club with varying comment and revision, during the weeks of the summer, and in November it was published.

Gulliver is the most familiar of all Swift's works; it probably deserves also to be called the greatest. Nothing better shows the play of his humor, his marvelous fertility of invention, the range and intensity of his satire. Swift is said to have been apprehensive that the *Gulliver* might betray some weakening of his powers; but his intellect and imagination seem to have worked on with unabated vigor, perhaps with morbid energy, until after 1730. Strange that this most terrible of satires should now sometimes be thought of as a children's book of wonder stories. The narrative is managed with such ingenious simplicity, the incidents and imagery, though striking, are so vivid and so consistent, that at least the first two books have been read by thousands of ingenuous youth without a suspicion of their satiric import. But it is to be hoped the time may never come when the underlying spirit of the *Gulliver* will be intelligible to any child. In the first two books, indeed, the temper is not altogether unhealthy; the satire is not yet

savage or bestial. They were probably written during the earlier years of Swift's Dublin residence, and the satire is directed against that political selfishness and ambition which in recent years had so often excited his indignation and contempt. But in the later books the object and the temper of the satire change. Swift's long exile, his sense of disappointment and failure in life, his dread of the physical disease that was steadily undermining his strength and threatened to drive him mad at last, above all his constant enforced contact with the misery and squalor of Irish life,—all these things are written darkly into the last two books of *Gulliver*. As the satire draws toward its awful close, its themes are no longer the folly of ambition, the littleness of power, not even the hollowness of philosophy and all that calls itself wisdom, but rather the burdens of our life, the inevitable ills of the flesh, the slow decay of age, and at last it includes in its sweep all the affections that can soften, as well as all the vices that can degrade, our common humanity. The Yahoos are a study of mankind quite dehumanized and imbruted; the Houyhnhnms are a race of rational animals whose stoical superiority is purchased at the cost of all natural emotions. There is no other satire so cruel and hopeless. And its effect is increased by Swift's impassive manner. There is nothing feverish and nothing exaggerated in his story. We feel that underneath the surface there burns a fierce, despairing indignation; but the cool and plausible narrative gives no sign.

Swift is undeniably our greatest satirist. His satire is never of the lighter sort that exposes to good-humored laughter our vanity and follies; severe and saturnine, it attacks only what seemed to Swift some essential falsehood. His motive is always the same,—he will tear away pretense and convention and expose the truth. We may grant that the limitations of Swift's nature made his definition of truth very narrow. Utterly devoid of sentiment, with no conception of the ideal element in life and no sympathy with aspiration after any ends not measured by reason and the senses, he was forced to interpret truth in the lowest terms of

reality. He could not see that much of the convention of society and of religion, so far from disguising hypocrisy, is an honest endeavor to express not our attainments but our ideals. Religious enthusiasm was to him always a symptom of imposture. Truth is best seen, he thought, in the cool light of the reason, and violent zeal for it, "has a hundred to one odds to be either petulancy, ambition or pride." [1] But these very limitations of sympathy which made Swift's satire often unjust add to its awful sincerity and vigor. There is no department of our nature in which his merciless eye will not detect some smallness or falsehood.

The method of Swift's satire is always to parody the seeming great in the little. Folly and vice often escape our notice when our vision is filled with the splendid figures of power or the long spectacle of history; but we see them when the same actions are parodied on the satirist's vulgar stage. And the wider the contrast in circumstance between the imposing falsehood and the homely verity, the more striking the satiric effect. This is the reason for the supremacy of Swift's two great satires. He has not wasted himself upon personal resentments, nor immortalized fools, as Pope has done by embalming them in the amber of his verse. He has chosen rather as the object of one of his satires the corruptions and divisions of the greatest organization on earth; and he has shown them to us in the homeliest possible story. In *Gulliver* the theme of his satire is wider still; nothing less than the pride, folly, and weakness of our race. And the narrative that conveys it is an old sailor's yarn.

There is a kind of droll literality about Swift's humorous imagination. He usually prefers not to give us new or strange images but rather to exhibit unexpected force in old ones. Thus he is fond of bringing out the vividness in any familiar figure by gravely taking it in its literal meaning as if he saw no other. This is well illustrated in that admirable early bit of foolery in which Swift, writing over the signature of Isaac Bickerstaff, had predicted that the

[1] *Thoughts on Religion, Works,* VIII, 53.

notorious quack and almanac maker, Partridge, would infallibly die of a fever on the twenty-ninth of March next, at eleven o'clock at night. On the thirtieth of March Bickerstaff issued another pamphlet gravely recounting the death of Partridge at the time predicted; and when next day the poor charlatan rushed into print frantically asserting that he was alive still, Bickerstaff proceeded to assure him that he must be mistaken and dead, and to prove it by a series of incontestable arguments, the best of which was that above a thousand gentlemen having bought Partridge's almanac this year, "at every line they read they would lift up their eyes and cry out betwixt rage and laughter, 'they were sure no man alive ever writ such damned stuff as this.' Neither did I ever hear that opinion disputed; so that Mr. Partridge lies under a dilemma, either of disowning his almanac, or allowing himself to be no man alive."

When Wood threatened that if the Irish people refused his coin he should force it down their throats by law, Swift set Dublin laughing by computing in all seriousness that it was doubtful whether there were throats enough in Ireland to swallow so much base metal. In fact, most of his narrative satire is only such a detailed satiric interpretation of some perfectly familiar metaphor. This is evidently true of the *Battle of the Books;* the *Modest Proposal* is a proposition, carried out in all its grim circumstance, that the English landlords should do literally, what they were actually doing in metaphor,—eat up the Irish poor; while Lilliput and Brobdingnag are simply a visible exhibition of human littleness. And Swift has astonishing power to realize the details of such a conception so as to enforce a belief in his narrative. It is said there were readers who searched the atlas to determine the location of Laputa, and one person stoutly averred Lemuel Gulliver to be his neighbor. Nor is this power a common one. Johnson, who rather begrudged any praise to Swift, could hardly have made a more inapt remark of *Gulliver* than that "when we have once thought of big men and little men it is easy enough

to do the rest." In fact, few things are more difficult to do. The imagination must invent an infinitude of plausible circumstances, all in strict consistence with each other and with the central supposition. For instance, the accuracy with which the scale of size is maintained in Lilliput has attracted the notice of one of the most acute of mathematical logicians.[1] But this is not all. Defoe, whose *Robinson Crusoe* probably gave Swift some hints for *Gulliver,* equals Swift in this power to invent credibilizing details; but Defoe constantly clogs his story with tedious matters that serve no other purpose than to increase its verisimilitude. The incidents in Swift's story, on the contrary, are always interesting in themselves and always advance the movement of his narrative. And withal Swift never forgets his allegorical purpose: every incident is in harmony with his mood, and all the more important ones have specific satiric import. It is this union of the most sweeping and scathing satire with the most homely, straight-forward, unimpassioned narrative that gives to Swift's work its unique quality, and causes the masterpiece of the greatest English cynic to be sometimes thought of as a nursery tale.

The temper of *Gulliver* Swift would not have tried to defend. The very foundation of his book, he said to Pope, was misanthropy. This, he felt more and more, was the disease of his soul. His only excuse was he could not help it. Do what he would, the black picture of humanity was constantly before his eyes. "Do not the corruptions and villainies of men in power eat your flesh and exhaust your spirits?" he once said to Delany. "Why, no, sir." "No, sir!" exclaimed Swift in a fury. "Why how can you help it, how can you avoid it?" *Gulliver* is the record of this black misanthropy which, beginning to make itself felt in any serious form only after his exile to Dublin, grew steadily upon him till it deprived him of his sovereignty of reason at the last.

Swift had been in London four months when news came of the illness of Stella that hurried him back to Ireland

[1] De Morgan.

in an agony of apprehension. Stella, however, rallied for a time, and he returned to London in April of 1727 to complete during the summer business that he had begun there. But he had little heart to enjoy the companionship of his old friends as he had done the year previous. His own malady tortured him as never before. His deafness had increased so that conversation was very difficult. His memory at times seemed to be slipping away. And worst of all was the constant apprehension of bad news from the one friend

> On whom my fears and hopes depend,
> Absent from whom all climes are curst,
> With whom I'm happy in the worst.[1]

In September the fatal tidings came. Stella was steadily sinking. "My God!" he writes, "I can't come. I can't see it! Write me only the facts; don't write me circumstances, I can't bear them. What am I to do in this world? I can hold up my sorry head no longer." In September he went back. It is said he could not bear the formalities of leave-taking with the friends whom he knew he should never see again, but stole away from Pope's house without saying any farewells. It was three months after he reached Dublin that the blow fell. Stella died on January 28, 1728. At eleven o'clock that night Swift began, and two nights later, too ill to rise from his bed but removed into another chamber where he might not catch through his windows the gleam of the funeral torches that lighted her to burial in the cathedral opposite, he continued that *Character of Mrs. Johnson,* which in its struggle to be calm, to tell the truth as in the presence of the dead, is one of the most pathetic things in the language. There is no word of hysterical sorrow in it, but a grief too deep for tears.

XII

The rest of Swift's life is soon told. With *Gulliver* his literary work was practically finished. He wrote a few

[1] From some verses written in a private journal by Swift while waiting at Holyhead for the Irish packet. They were first printed by Mr. Craik, *Swift,* Appendix IX.

more tracts on Irish matters, urging on the Irish people, as he had always done, habits of self-help, and a temper of self-assertion. These later pamphlets show a most poignant sense of the misery of the great mass of the Roman Catholic peasantry. The most famous of them, *A Modest Proposal,* in which he suggests that the infant children of the peasantry be used as food, so far from being as it is often regarded, a piece of cold-blooded brutality, is a cry of despairing pity and anger, wrung from Swift at a time when all over Ireland the wretched cotters were dying of famine by hundreds and left unburied before their own doors, while absentee landlords were spending their rents in England. Swift himself was still faithful to his clerical duties in these latest years, and a score of stories attest his personal benevolence, his rough but kindly helpfulness. He sadly owned that it was the necessity of his nature "to hate and detest that animal called man"; but he had always pity and aid for individual members of the species. His services for Irish liberty had won him the hearts of all the humble folk in Ireland, Catholic and Protestant alike. He gave a woman a guinea, one day, to buy a gown, stipulating only that it should be of Irish stuff; she came back shortly with a full set of his books, protesting, "Faith, your reverence, they're the best Irish stuff I know." Over the mob of Dublin, he was, says Orrery, "the most absolute monarch that ever ruled men." And he used his mastery well. He was enraged at Irish servility, but he would not flatter Irish grandiloquence or countenance Irish lawlessness. When Archbishop Boulter, the rancorous primate who governed the Irish church on the narrowest Whig principles, once complained that Swift fostered disaffection in the Dublin populace, Swift retorted, "if I had lifted my hand, they would have torn you in a thousand pieces."

But nothing could much relieve the deepening gloom that was settling about Swift's life. The death of Stella left him alone. He had gathered about him a small circle of acquaintance, but no friends to take the place of the old ones. His most intimate companions after 1730 were

Dr. Delany, a fellow of Trinity, now remembered chiefly as lucky enough to marry a bright woman,—also of Swift's circle,—who wrote a charming diary; and one Thomas Sheridan, a careless, happy-go-lucky Irish schoolmaster, who was blest with good wits but with no sense to use them. Swift found much diversion in Sheridan's rough-and-ready Irish wit: they wrote each other doggerel verse, badgered each other in execrable puns, and between them both wrote nonsense enough to fill a good-sized volume. Swift tried also to knock a little hard sense into the rather roomy head of his friend; but he never had much success in that attempt. He still kept up his correspondence with the old London circle, but there is in his letters the melancholy assurance of final separation. And as one after another they began to drop away his own hopeless isolation became intolerable. "Within the past twenty years," he wrote Pope in 1736, "I have lost twenty-seven great men of art and learning. I have nobody left but you now." In that year his illness[1] began to assume the form that he had so long dreaded; his mental powers began to fail rapidly. This decline continued, accompanied by periods of intense physical agony until the summer of 1742; then, after some weeks of most acute suffering, he sank into a state of torpor that lasted until the end. He died October 19, 1745.

XIII

Swift owes his eminence not to a facile and cultivated genius like Addison's, or to a carefully developed literary art like Pope's. He was not a man of large attainments or of great breadth of mind. He had not the charm of urbane manners; he was indifferent to all the studied niceties of literature. It was his tremendous force of character that lifted him above his contemporaries. No other Englishman of that half century has impressed his personality so deeply upon our imagination. All the men of his time seem

[1] The physicians in recent times pronounce Swift's malady to be labyrinthine vertigo or Ménière's disease.

pale and tame beside his stern, proud figure. The few who loved him and the many who feared him, alike bowed before that imperious personality. Even in the little circle of his great friends in London there was always some tacit recognition of his dominance. Of all that circle it was Arbuthnot who knew him best and loved him most; yet in Arbuthnot's delightful letters to Swift there is a tone of deference not heard in his other correspondence. "He was always alone," says Thackeray.

Force of character like this always implies positiveness of conviction united with energy of will. Swift's range of intellectual interests was not very wide, but within its limits his judgments were inflexible. He was not one of those easy men who are ready to admit that much may be said on both sides. With reference to most matters on which it seemed to him worth while to think at all, he had made up his mind; and he had no patience with the hesitating temper that takes credit to itself for liberality and openness of view. He had, in its most dogmatic form, the eighteenth century confidence in the infallibility of reason. He held that in all important matters a needful amount of truth is always accessible to honest search; doubt or dispute about it, therefore, implied either feebleness of mind, which roused his contempt, or wilful blindness, which roused his anger. In the last book of *Gulliver* the gray Houyhnhnm finds it very difficult to understand what men can mean by that word "opinion," or how any point can be disputable. For among the noble Houyhnhnms, says Gulliver, reason is not "a point problematical, as with us, where men can argue with plausibility on both sides of the question; but strikes you with immediate conviction as it must needs do where it is not mingled, obscured, or discolored, by passion and interest." When such positiveness of conviction is backed by corresponding energy of will, the man may be domineering and arrogant, but he is irresistible. Constrained by the very honesty of his convictions to tolerate no difference of opinion and to allow no compromise, he imputes all intelligent opposition to obstinacy and bears it down by sheer personal

force. This, it may be admitted, was Swift's method. Among friends of similar views to his own he was a most delightful companion, with a humor and imagination quite unmatched in his age. Nor did he invite controversy; on the contrary, he always deprecated the intrusion into society of those political topics that separated old friends, and his long friendship with Addison is proof of his willingness to exclude all cause for difference from their acquaintance. Controversy once begun, though, he gave his adversary no alternative but to succumb or retire. He was impatient of contradiction even from his friends; and showed a lack of intellectual sympathy which was a part of the price of his personal power.

It was this intense personality that made Swift's sense of failure so tragic. For natures like his do not brook defeat. They will not learn to adapt themselves and make the best of things. They cannot believe themselves meant for failure. And in fact they do not often fail. To change Portius' old proverb a little, they may not deserve success but they will command it. Yet adverse circumstances may sometimes thwart powers that no rival could surpass and no enemy withstand. That seemed Swift's fate. He was hampered by poverty and isolation in his early life; he was connected during his best years with a party that was successful only for a few months and never represented a majority that was permanent or ideas that were progressive; he was exiled just at his meridian to a country he hated, and was surrounded by a people whom he could not help despising even while he served them. Thus he was condemned all his days to chafe under the conviction of great possibilities he might never realize. Only once did he find a scene in which he could give his powers full swing; and then only long enough to make more bitter the enforced inactivity or uncongenial effort to which he was remanded for the rest of his life. Moreover a merciless disease was creeping surely upon him, and he knew it. "I shall be like that tree," said he to a friend once, pointing to a blasted elm. "I shall die at the top." Add to adverse fortune the agonizing prescience of

this doom,—for Scott assigned this remark to the year 1717, —and we shall not wonder that this eager but baffled spirit consumed itself in hopeless anger till it passed to where—in the words he wrote for his own epitaph—*Sæva indignatio cor ulterius lacerare nequit.*

If the account of Swift's career given in the foregoing pages be correct, it is evident that he was not guilty of some of the charges that have been brought against him. He was no time-server or turn-coat in politics. He was not heartless or fickle in his relations with those two women whose story is so strangely twined with his. Still less was he a hypocrite. No more sincere man ever lived. In fact, his consuming hatred of shams was the motive of most of his work. He was what Bolingbroke well called "a hypocrite reversed" and had a morbid dread of seeming what he was not. It was this that caused him sometimes to belie in outward seeming his own best qualities, and occasioned grave misunderstanding of his character. Thus he certainly was not a cold-blooded cynic; but he sometimes seemed one. Friendship never lay deeper in any man's heart than in his, or took stronger hold on any life. He loved his friends sincerely, and they loved him,—the wisest and best of them loved him most. Their sorrows and bereavements smote him to the heart. Some of his letters of sympathy and condolence—to Harley, to Pope, to Arbuthnot, to Lady Betty Germaine —are among the noblest and most moving ever penned. But, as is often the case with such rugged natures, he had a distrust of all emotion as a sign of weakness; and was so intolerant of sentimentality that he often seemed devoid of sentiment. Not only was he too bluntly honest to express any emotion that he did not feel, but he pushed his dread of dissimulation so far that he refused to adopt the conventionalities of sympathy, and often gave offense by what seemed brutal frankness or indifference. He refuses to join with the ministers in their expressions of pity and humanity for their old enemy, Godolphin, simply because "he is dead and can do them no hurt." He bluntly expresses his impatience at Mrs. Masham's anxiety over her sick child at a

moment when great affairs demand her attention. Sometimes, indeed, he cynically depreciates our most instinctive affections on the ground that they warp our judgment and are inconsistent with rational attachment. Such passages really indicate, not that he was himself incapable of these affections, but on the contrary, that he felt himself liable to be softened or misled by their excess. Moreover, it must be admitted that his own emotions, though they had great depth and intensity, were singularly deficient in delicacy. In his relations with other people he had almost none of that power to appreciate finer shades of feeling upon which quickness of sympathy depends. His nature was too robust and strenuous to admit any possibilities of grace or refinement; and much attention to the amenities of life seemed to him inconsistent with sincerity and earnestness.

Much of Swift's seeming irreverence may be explained in a similar way. A careful reading of his letters and works will convince any candid person that he was at heart a reverent man. In the presence of the great mysteries of religion he bows with silent awe. But if he had reverence for truth, he never had any sympathetic respect for what he thought surely false, simply because other people thought it true. Such a compliance seemed to him a kind of treachery to his own convictions. Lacking, as has been said, in intellectual sympathy and in delicate consideration for the feelings of others, he often, by his very sincerity, seemed to pass into almost brutal irreverence, and gave offense which he himself could never understand. The *Tale of a Tub,* for instance, has shocked many people by its ruthless satire upon doctrines and usages which they hold sacred, or at all events regard as invested with sacred associations even if they do not accept them. But to Swift these things were simply not true. They were part of that mass of delusion which arrogance had foisted upon superstition; they belonged to the army of shams against which he felt consuming indignation. This being so, he never could understand why any one who disbelieved them should object to ridiculing them. As to his own religious attitude, his dread of anything like pretense

exaggerated the healthy reserve that most men feel in the expression of religious sentiments into a morbid reticence and concealment. He followed almost too literally the Scriptural exhortation to secrecy both in his charities and in his devotions. Yet surely no man has a right to impugn his sincerity. He believed his creed. He accepted its mysteries, and had nothing but contempt for those flippant coffee-house skeptics who glibly professed to believe nothing they could not understand. Whether he knew much of the inspiration and the consolations of Christianity may perhaps admit of a mournful doubt. His belief hardly rose into that faith which can be hopeful in the presence of the universal spectacle of folly and sin. The grim picture of the world's wrong was always before his eyes: that, in spite of it, he held any silent belief is surely proof, not of hypocrisy, but of profound intellectual conviction.

But it is Swift's misanthropy that has done most to turn the verdict of posterity against him. Men cannot be expected to think well of him; for he didn't think well of men. This misanthropy did not show itself in any repellent form until after the great disappointment of his exile to Ireland in 1714. Yet the seeds of it were in his nature. No man was ever so endowed with the satiric gift to detect unveracities, to pierce through all conventions, to see how little substance is concealed by the big shows of life. And this gift is always fatal to its possessor unless it be balanced by a power to see also the manifold good of life and tempered by that charity which believeth and hopeth. He who does not love men will soon lose faith in them; then, the keener his vision, the sterner his sense of right, the more intense will be his indignation against his kind. And indignation, even righteous indignation, is not a mood in which any man may live happily or beneficently. Now in those redeeming graces that sweeten the satiric temper, Swift was by nature deficient. His affections, as we have seen, were deep—perhaps all the deeper and more impetuous because confined to so narrow a channel; but he never had much genial humanity. The broad injunction of the second commandment he avowed

himself unable to keep. This unfortunate temper would probably, in any case, have grown more bitter with advancing years; age dispels some generous illusions even for the most charitable man. But in Swift it was frightfully exaggerated by disappointment and disease. In his later years he too often lost all power of discrimination in his all-embracing hatred of the race; and his anger at our sins was swallowed up in his contempt for our weakness.

But here again let us at least give Swift credit for sincerity. He was none of your easy gentlemen, who preach *vanitas vanitatum* in a graceful and superior manner. He never heightened his indignation for declamatory effect,—as Carlyle did,—or made literary capital of his misanthropy. The black side of life gradually filled all his vision; he did not love it, but he could not thrust it away. This suggests the true explanation for the passages of extreme physical grossness that sometimes offend us in his writing. They are due in part, no doubt, to his lack of delicacy and his bold defiance of all conventions. Yet he was himself a scrupulously clean man in his habits and conversation,—far more so than Pope,—and rebuked any violations of decency by others with unsparing severity. The truth seems to be, it was a mark of the morbid perversity of his temper that whatsoever was most displeasing to him forced itself most persistently into his thought. He dwells upon filth not because he loves it, but because he hates it. He disgusts us by the expression of his own disgust. This tendency increased in his later years, and Delany is doubtless right in taking it as a symptom of mental unsoundness. In truth the last word with reference to Swift should always be that whatever in his character most needs excuse was due in part to incurable physical disease—in how large part, only He can tell who so strangely joins these minds and bodies of ours, and to whom alone belongeth judgment.

ROBERT BURNS

IT is hard to fix on any date or name that may mark with accuracy the beginning of a new literary era; changes in literary manner are gradual, and you may find in Goldsmith, or still more in Cowper, notes of the new music and some breath of the new inspiration. But it seems to me that the new poetry began in a harvest-field of Scotland, on the skirts of the pleasant valley of the Ayr, in the autumn of 1773. In accordance with the old Scottish fashion each man and boy of the reapers has his partner among the women and girls of the harvest folk. Among all the lassies none sings more sweetly than trim little Nellie Kilpatrick, the daughter of the blacksmith at Ayr. She is but fourteen and her partner not quite a year older, proud that this year 'first among the yellow corn, a man he reckoned is.' Here, by your leave, Messrs. Pope and Gay and Shenstone, here is a bit of genuine pastoral. Nellie sings divinely—albeit mostly to one tune; and the words are wretched doggerel some country laird has written to his lady. But the notes of her song, as they two loiter behind the rest when they fare home from the harvest-field in the twilight, have touched in the heart of the boy that chord which was hardly ever to be still again so long as he lived.

I see her yet, the sonsie quean
That lighted up my jingle,
Her witching smile, her pauky een,
That gart my heart-strings tingle!
I, firèd inspirèd,
At ev'ry kindling keek,
But, bashing and dashing,
I fearèd ay to speak.

But why not tell it in a song, fitted to the air she herself was so often singing. He could at least write as good a one as the country laird. And thus love awoke the music:

O, once I lov'd a bonie lass,
  Ay, and I love her still!
And whilst that virtue warms my breast
  I'll love my handsome Nell.

As bonie lasses I hae seen,
  And monie full as braw,
But for a modest gracefu' mien
  The like I never saw.

. . . . . .

She dresses aye sae clean and neat,
  Both decent and genteel;
And then there's something in her gait
  Gars onie dress look weel.

A gaudy dress and gentle air
  May slightly touch the heart;
But it's innocence and modesty
  That polishes the dart.

'Tis this in Nelly pleases me,
  'Tis this enchants my soul;
For absolutely in my breast
  She reigns without controul.

This, as he used always after to say, was Robert Burns' first love and first song. I think we may call it the beginning of our new poetry. But we shall mistake if we think this bit of pretty pastoral came out of a sunny and quiet life. Assuredly the life of this man, Robert Burns, was a tragedy if any ever was, and the tragedy had already begun. His father clearly enough was a man of much native judgment and penetration, a stern, yet kindly, observant, patient, God-fearing man. But he wore his life slowly out in the silent struggle to wring from seven poor acres barely bread enough to keep his family from starvation—bread literally, "for years butcher's meat was unknown in our house," says one of the brothers.

At thirteen Robert was threshing all day with the men. At sixteen his shoulders were rounded; he went to bed every night with dull headache, with frequent faintness, and a feeling of suffocation. And the worst was, all would not

suffice. Every year saw the old father steadily weakening, and the whole family, with a proud Scottish dread of beggary, drawing nearer the desperate verge of want. Robert was naturally gay and buoyant, with an immense fund of animal spirits; but his life already told upon him. He was moody and often depressed as no boy of fifteen ought ever to be. Poverty when it pinches but moderately and only seems to brace the young man's power to more resolute effort, is often a great blessing; but poverty like that of Robert Burns is a curse which has slight mitigations. For it isn't merely physical privations and hardship that such poverty brings. This young man has intellectual cravings; but there are no libraries and universities for him. This young Robert Burns has a vivid imagination, a prompt unerring taste; but the great world of literature is all but closed to him. He reads over the few books he can find at home; besides the big ha' Bible, there was a *Spectator,* a Pope, a *Locke On the Human Understanding,* and *The Whole Duty of Man;* in none of which save the Bible would he be likely to find much. He borrows books when he can, gets a look into Shakespeare, and best of all finds a collection of old Scots songs, which he learns by heart. But this is about all the young poet can get before he is eighteen.

Then, too, this young man has native social gifts of the rarest sort; wit, exuberant spirits, keen penetration, versatility, tact, and that rare power of ardent, fascinating converse which was afterward to astonish for a little time the great people of Edinburgh. "Why, sir, his conversation set me completely off my feet," said the lively Duchess of Gordon, you remember. Such a young fellow must have vague, half-conscious, social longings and aspirations: he needs the stimulating and refining companionship of those who can appreciate and exercise his powers. But what society can young Robert Burns have? His brilliant conversation is squandered upon those who toil with him in the peat-bog or at the plow-tail. His tender heart and kindling fancy made him, in turn, the devotee of almost every comely girl in the parish; but it is doubtful whether in all the little

circle of those to whom he dared lift his thought there was one who could write her name. You recall the arch humor and independence of the verses he wrote on Miss Jennie Ronalds who lived in the big house, and whose father was supposed to have something handsome to give away with his girl when the fit suitor should come:

> To proper young men, he'll clink in the hand,
> Gowd guineas a hunder or two, man.
> . . . . . .
> I lo'e her mysel, but darena weel tell,
> My poverty keeps me in awe, man;
> For making o' rhymes, and working at times,
> Does little or naething at a', man.
>
> Yet I wadna choose to let her refuse,
> Nor hae 't in her power to say na, man:
> For though I be poor, unnoticed, obscure,
> My stomach's as proud as them a', man.
> . . . . . .
> I never was canny for hoarding o' money,
> Or claughtin't together at a', man;
> I've little to spend and naething to lend,
> But devil a shilling I awe, man.

It is dangerous thus to confine a young man's regard to those who are so much his inferiors, and to shut up too straitly such powers and such desires. If they cannot find outlet in one way, they will in another. Before he is twenty young Burns is already beginning to show a restless discontent with his lot, and breaks out now and then in moody defiance of those proprieties upon which the inequality of society seems to depend.

Yet up to the age of twenty-three his life, if cramped and meager, is yet a pure and manly one. He is under his father's roof, where the light of a holy piety shines, calm and steady. And with all the hardships of his lot, there are compensations: he has the light spirits, the quenchless hope of youth, self-respect and independence, sympathies quick and unsullied, and an imagination that can shed a freshening light over all the homely routine of his life.

In days when daisies deck the ground,
And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound,
To see the coming year:
On braes when we please then,
We'll sit an' sowth a tune;
Syne rhyme till 't we'll time till't,
An' sing 't when we hae done.

It's no in titles nor in rank:
It's no in wealth like Lon'on Bank,
To purchase peace and rest,
It's no in makin muckle, mair;
It's no in books, it's no in lear,
To make us truly blest:
If happiness hae not her seat
An' centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest!
Nae treasures nor pleasures
Could make us happy lang;
The heart ay's the part ay
That makes us right or wrang.

Good philosophy as well as good poetry that, and Burns doubtless had occasion in those early years to put it often to the test.

But it is from his twenty-third year that I should date a new chapter in the history of Burns. Early in that year, there happened to Burns that event which has made an era in the life of many a young fellow—a certain young lady said No. The rather unpoetic name which Burns wished this young lady to change seems to have been Begbie. She was the daughter of a country farmer, and out at service; but from what is known of her, one judges her to have been a girl of tact and art, and withal fairly well educated. Burns' letters to Miss Elison Begbie are manly and noble,—much better love-letters, I am bound to say, than he ever wrote again. And it was to her that he wrote a series of his best love lyrics. All those familiar with Scottish song will recall that charming melody *My Nannie O*, with the words which Burns fitted to it; and some students of Burns

think that Elison Begbie is the object of that best of all his early love song, *Mary Morison.*

O Mary, at thy window be!
It is the wish'd, the trysted hour.
Those smiles and glances let me see,
That make the miser's treasure poor.
How blythely wad I bide the stoure,
A weary slave frae sun to sun,
Could I the rich reward secure—
The lovely Mary Morison!

But Mary Morison was thrifty as well as bonny, and Rab Burns was very poor and not like to be richer: and so she said No. I think it a pity. It is idle, doubtless, to conjecture what might have been,—yet it seems to me here was a woman not too far above him in social rank who might, nevertheless, have proved a companion for Burns, the poet, as well as Burns, the peasant. Sure I am he never found such an one again.

But worse things befell Burns in this year. Near the close of it, soon after he had received his last letter from Elison Begbie, he went away to the neighboring sea-coast town of Irvine to learn the manufacture of flax, hoping thereby to eke out a little the slender income of the family. He carried away with him a heart smarting some, it may be, from Mary Morison's refusal, and certainly embittered and reckless at the vexations of his lot. And he carried it to a bad place. Irvine was a vile little town; and the companions Burns met there—sailors and smugglers—louder and wilder than any he had before consorted with. One among them, especially, who had knocked about the world a good deal and whose gay wit and adventurous temper had a charm for Burns, taught the young Ayrshire peasant that devil's own lie, that purity is a childish virtue, and that a certain modicum of vice is a manly accomplishment for any young fellow. "His friendship did me much harm," said Burns a few years later. In sad truth it did—and the fruits of it were too soon evident. Burns came home from Irvine to find his father, worn out at last, on his death-bed. "I'm

troubled," said the dying old man, "I'm troubled for one o' my boys." "O, father, is it me ye mean?" said Robert, bursting into tears. "Aye, Rab, it is," the old father could only falter. His forebodings were but too true, and before the father had been in his grave a twelvemonth, his son Robert, his good name smirched, and—what was worse—with a blot on the native purity and delicacy of his feelings, was writing for the first time verses such as he should never have written, verses in which he vainly strives to glory in his shame and to drown in bravado the monitions of a wounded conscience.

We cannot forget, indeed, that the short life of this man was darkened by sins as well as by sorrows; nor need we try to forget. It is no real charity to overlook the dark facts in any man's career. Let us know the truth. But we ought to remember that in the case of any poet, certainly any poet so frank and impulsive as Burns, the life must be judged by the writings, and not the writings by the life. The free open joyousness, the manly honesty that hated sham and cant, the religious sensibilities he got from his father and never wholly lost, the struggling aspirations of the man, his soft pity and tenderness, his tremulous susceptibility to whatever is pure and gentle: all these things we see in the poetry; and they are the real Burns,—the heart of him. For it isn't so much what a man does, as what he tries to do, or even longs to do, that we should remember:

> What's done we partly may compute
> But know not what's resisted.

A short time before the death of their father, Burns and his brother Gilbert had leased the small farm of Mossgiel, near Mauchline, and thither they now removed, with their mother and sister, and such fragments as they could save from the wreck of the family fortunes. Robert now set himself at work with the desperate resolve to be a thrifty farmer. "I read farming books," says he, "I calculated crops. I attended markets, and in short, in spite of the devil, the world, and the flesh, I believe I should have been a wise

man: but the first year from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second from a late harvest we lost half our crops. This overset all my wisdom." I am afraid that the world, the flesh, and the devil must share with bad crops and bad seed the responsibility for Burns' failure as farmer; but it is to be noted that during these two years of comparative thrift and persistence he produced more poetry than during all the rest of his life put together. If he could have been content with his lot, and grown old as peasant poet, unspoiled by praise and undisturbed by the restless longings of more idle ambitions, who shall say what stores of humor, of wisdom, and of pathos his ripened experience might have left us. For early and late it was only when upon his farm that Burns was a poet. But here for a little time he kept himself steady to one course of life. If he was shut out from all high converse with books and men, he sought the more the companionship of his own imagination. He lived out of doors with his eyes and his heart open to the charms of rural nature, and in the lives of the homely cottagers about him he saw—more clearly perhaps than he could in a more artificial society—those truths of human nature that are good for all men and all times. It was in the Mossgiel field that the mouse, "wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie," ran from his ruined nest to be immortalized in pitying verse which we shall remember so long as

> The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men
> Gang aft agley,
> An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
> For promis'd joy.

And it was in the Mauchline church, I take it, that the "ugly, creepin', blastit wonner" on

> The vera topmost, tow'ring height
> O' Miss's bonnet

suggested to Burns the wish we can all take to heart,

> O wad some Power the giftie gie us,
> To see oursels as ithers see us!

His Pegasus was his old mare, Maggie, and his choicest inspiration came to him at the plow-tail. He composed his verses mostly out of doors, while plodding slow in the furrow, or digging in the peat-bog, and then at evening shutting himself into his little attic chamber wrote them out by the light of a single candle and laid them away in the drawer of an old deal table, where his sister would steal up to read them while he was in the fields at work. Mrs. Oliphant remarks that by the early summer of 1786 there must have been more good poetry in the drawer of that attic table than could have been found in manuscript anywhere else in Europe,—unless possibly it were in the portfolio of Herr Goethe in Weimar. For my part, I should be inclined to say more. This poetry that for two years this man has been putting into this attic drawer, if you measure it by the variety of high poetic qualities it has,—imagination, melody, humor, pathos, pithy human wisdom,—and I am sure that if you measure it by its power to meet our daily human sympathies,—"to come home to men's business and bosoms",—you will have to say of this drawer full of verse that no one writer between William Shakespeare and Robert Burns can show any body of poetry to match it. And yet it has been written by a plowman, only twenty-seven years old, who was never more than about a dozen miles from the smoke of his cottage and never saw a city, who has never owned a score of books in his life, whose only friends are plain country folk with no relish of letters, who has never had a word of distinctly literary criticism, guidance, or suggestion from any one, and who has never printed a line. Here assuredly is a fact worthy the notice of the historian of literature.

Meantime the farm was a failure; and other things were going very sadly. In the summer of 1786 came the crisis that ends the first chapter of Burns' life. It was a year or more before when Burns, walking into Mauchline village, had first seen the comely face of Jean Armour. Miss Jean was spreading out linen upon the grass to bleach, and as Rab Burns' ever present dog came frisking over it she

threw a stone at the dog and a word at its master. "Lassie," said Burns with a laugh in his eye, "Lassie, if ye thought oght o' me, ye wadna hurt my dog." "I said to mysel," said Jean in telling the story long after, "I said to mysel, I wadna think much o' you at ony rate." But Jean reckoned without her host: Rab Burns was never again to be long out of her thought or her life. The next spring, 1786, to shield so far as possible her honor and his own, Burns gave to Jean Armour privately a written agreement of marriage which was binding before the Scottish law. About the same time, Burns, harassed by the increasing hardships of his lot, resolved to try to mend his fortunes abroad. He accepted a position as bookkeeper on the estate of a Mr. Douglas in Jamaica. He had not even the few pounds necessary to pay his passage, and to get them he resolved, at the suggestion of his friend, Gavin Hamilton, to print the verses that lay in the drawer of that attic table. All this in March of 1786. It seems to me certain from the letters of the poet that it was about the first of April—after Burns had taken his resolution to go to Jamaica, and not before, as all the biographies say or imply—that Jean Armour's father discovered the relations between Burns and his daughter. James Payne, the novelist, tells somewhere in his Reminiscences of a hard-headed Scotchman who recommended most warmly the moral character of one of his young friends, and on being reminded of some rather dark facts in the young fellow's record rejoined eagerly—"Hoot, man! *that's* not what I mean by immoral; but gamblin,' and sic things as ye lose money by!" Old Armour's standard of morality seems to have been of that kind; for he cared less for the reputation of his daughter than for her fortune. He would not consent that girl of his should for any reason whatever become the wife of so poor and shiftless a fellow as Robert Burns; and insisted that she destroy the marriage contract. Jean consented,—too willingly, Burns thought; the writing was torn up; Jean went away from Mauchline, and the father threatened young Burns with legal proceedings. Sad and pitiful details, over which one would not

wish to linger: but they cannot be forgotten in recounting the career of the poet; for they really did much to shorten and darken that career. Burns had blighted his future; his work as a poet in fact was nearly done before a single line of his poetry had been printed. More than nine-tenths of all the poems we know and love were written before he left Mossgiel.

The later biographers of Burns have obliged us—somewhat reluctantly—to believe that it is in this same unlucky spring of 1786, that we must place the pathetic story,—best known of all that find record in Burns' life,—the story of Highland Mary. Yet we must not accuse him of cold hypocrisy or downright treachery. In April Burns found that Jean had disavowed the marriage plight, had consented to the destruction of the sacred paper, and had gone away from Mauchline. He was torn by a throng of conflicting emotions, in which sorrow for his own sin, remorseful pity for Jean's future, and hot indignation at her seeming weakness and treachery were strangely mingled. This tumult of feeling is seen in the odes, *To Despondency* and *To Ruin,* in that touching poem, *The Lament,* and in the more familiar lines to that daisy which one day in that same April he saw roll down under the turning sod as he plodded wearily behind the plow:—

Wee, modest, crimson-tippèd flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonie gem.

Alas! it's no thy neebor sweet,
The bonie lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet,
Wi' spreckl'd breast!
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling east.

. . . . . .

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sun-ward spread,

Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!

. . . . . .

Such is the fate of simple Bard,
On Life's rough ocean luckless starr'd!
Unskilful he to note the card
Of prudent lore,
Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
And whelm him o'er!

. . . . . .

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date;
Stern Ruin's plough-share drives elate,
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight,
Shall be thy doom!

It is easy to say how a man of firmer fiber and more noble character might have borne himself in such circumstances; but it seems to me very natural that Burns with his volatile temper and his hunger for affection should just then accept first the gentle pity of Highland Mary, and then the love to which that pity is proverbially akin. Of Mary Campbell we really know nothing save that she had once been a dairy maid, and was now at service in the family of Burns' friend, Hamilton. But one thinks she must have been a girl whose sweet modesty had something firm and self-respecting in it. Certain it is that the few verses Burns addressed to her, or which enshrine this Mary of his, have not only tenderness and ardor, but respect as well. I feel sure that this Highland lass seemed to Burns in that spring of 1786 the embodiment of purity and truth, and that thoughts of her could summon whatever of firm resolve and chaste affection was yet possible to him. She was, you know, the Mary in memory of whom he wrote that song which to so many of us is among the recollections of our childhood, sung by lips over which nothing impure could ever breathe,—"Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes."

We all remember the oft-told story,—how on the 14th

of May they met and parted for the last time, by the banks of Ayr, exchanged their Bibles, and standing one on either side of the stream with hands clasped over the murmuring water pledged their lasting love and faith. Burns expected before the summer was over to go to Jamaica; and Mary was starting for her home in the Highlands whence she was to return to meet—it seems likely to wed—her lover before he crossed the sea. But Burns was never to go to the Indies; and poor Mary was never to return from the Highlands or to see his face again. The scene of that parting might well be a shrine for lovers' and for poets' visits: and I can aver that one humble pilgrim who could not claim to belong to either class, when he first found his way, one summer afternoon not many years since, to that secluded spot, felt that the charm of the poet's love and verse was upon it yet, and that in the tranquil beauty of leafy glade and gurgling brook the wish in the opening stanza of that sweetest and saddest of songs still found fulfillment:

Ye banks and braes and streams around
  The castle o' Montgomery,
Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,
  Your waters never drumlie!
There summer first unfald her robes,
  And there the langest tarry!
For there I took the last fareweel
  O' my sweet Highland Mary!

How sweetly bloom'd the gay, green birk,
  How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade
  I clasp'd her to my bosom!
The golden hours on angel wings,
  Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me as light and life
  Was my sweet Highland Mary.

Wi' monie a vow, and lock'd embrace
  Our parting was fu' tender;
And, pledging aft to meet again,
  We tore oursels asunder.
But O, fell Death's untimely frost,

That nipt my flower sae early!
Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,
That wraps my Highland Mary!

O pale, pale now, those rosy lips,
I aft hae kiss'd sae fondly;
An closed for ay, the sparkling glance,
That dwalt on me sae kindly;
And mouldering now in silent dust
That heart that lo'ed me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core
Shall live my Highland Mary.

On the events of that unhappy summer it is not necessary to linger. In July came the publication of the poems. The fame of them ran quickly through the poet's native Ayrshire, and doors were open to the young fellow where he had never been known before. Some copies got to Edinburgh, and there among the dons the verdict was the same as among the country folk. And finally one day in October, the great Professor Dugald Stewart of Edinburgh University, staying for some weeks in the country near Mauchline, invited the peasant poet to dine, and the guest that sits next him at dinner is a real lord,—

October twenty-third,
A ne'er-to-be forgotten day,
Sae far I sprachl'd up the brae
I dinner'd wi' a Lord.

All this could not but start new hopes in the breast of Burns. The possibilities of a new career glimmered before him. His determination to go to the Indies wavered. He had the hearty Scottish love for his native soil, and he dreaded the thought of exile. And there were dearer ties, which, reason as he would, he could not throw off. For Jean was home, with her twin babes. But, after all, there seemed for him no other course. He kept to his determination to sail for Jamaica about the last of October. He secured his passage. He paid his last visit to kind Dr. Lawrie, and walking home at nightfall across the dreary moors com-

posed that plaintive "Farewell," set to an old Scots air that moans and croons like the sighing wind over a lonely land:

> The gloomy night is gath'ring fast,
> Loud roars the wild inconstant blast;
> Yon murky cloud is filled with rain,
> I see it driving o'er the plain;
> . . . . . .
> Chill runs my blood to hear it rave:
> I think upon the stormy wave,
> Where many a danger I must dare,
> Far from the bonie banks of Ayr.
>
> 'Tis not the surging billows' roar,
> 'Tis not that fatal, deadly shore;
> Tho' death in ev'ry shape appear,
> The wretched have no more to fear:
> But round my heart the ties are bound,
> That heart transpierc'd with many a wound;
> These bleed afresh, those ties I tear,
> To leave the bonie banks of Ayr.

But just at the last minute came word again from Dr. Blacklock up in Edinburgh, calling for a new edition of the poems, and promising for them a "more universal circulation than anything of the kind which has been published in my memory." This reversed the wavering decision of the poet. He decided to remain in Scotland, and to go up to Edinburgh to superintend the new edition of his poems that was to be issued there.

So far as I can make out the dates, it could not have been more than a fortnight before he set out for Edinburgh that an incident occurred which must have added one last and bitterest drop to the heart full of secret sorrows which the young man carried with him to the scene of his triumph. He was at home at Mossgiel one evening when a letter was brought him. "He turned to the window to read it, and the family noted on a sudden that his face changed. He went out without speaking: and they respected his silence and said no word." That letter contained the intelligence that Highland Mary, having come from her home as far as

Greenock to meet Burns, had sickened there and died. Perhaps it was better so.

> The love where Death has set his seal,
> Nor age can chill, nor rival steal,
> Nor falsehood disavow.

But with what despair of any calm and peaceful contentment in his fame, must this young poet have gone up to meet his great friends in Edinburgh!

It is easy to understand why that little volume of verse found so many eager readers in Edinburgh; so long as pathos, humor, and melody are alive in the human heart these verses will find eager readers in every clime. But it is not so easy for us nowadays, living as we do after the close of that great poetic era which Burns began, to realize what a surprise this little book must have been to all lovers of poetry. It came at a time when the poetic muse, now grown a very prim and proper person, seemed about to desert Britain altogether. In England there was only Cowper, and he was not the vogue; in Scotland there was nobody. Just when Mr. Robert Burns came up to Edinburgh, the literary lions of the Scottish capital were Dr. Blair, whose rhetoric book our fathers used conscientiously to cram, but whose writings—so far as I have ever looked into them—are as polished and as cold as any gravestone; Dr. Beattie, whose long poem, *The Minstrel,* is a curious attempt to give a romantic flavor to the warmed over philosophy of Pope; and the "Man of Feeling" Mackenzie, editor of the *Lounger,* one of the innumerable periodicals on the model of the *Spectator,*—a pleasant, graceful, rather shallow, courteous man, mere Addison and water.

Perhaps it is not easy, then, I say, to realize how welcome to a society which began to weary of these feeble artificialities in literature must have been this little book of homely Scottish verse, as new and fresh as if it were the first ever written. Here was a volume of verse with no chill philosophy, no attempt at courtly grace, none of the old academic rhetoric, and not even a couplet of the old Popish

sort; no more like the poetry of the old school than the song of a blackbird is like a lecture on ethics, and yet even the infallible Dr. Blair was forced to admit that it was poetry, and poetry of a very remarkable kind. It is now a commonplace of English literary history to say that with Burns nature and passion, after their long absence of one hundred and fifty years, came back again to English verse. And in these particulars, the change could go no further than it goes in this poetry of Burns. Consider his naturalness. Of all our poets of anything like equal eminence, Burns is by far the most simple and direct in utterance. His phrase always seems the homely, obvious one that comes unsought. There are no inversions, no rhetorical devices, no sense of the burdensomeness of meter; he simply warmed his thought till it glowed, and ran melting into verse. There are numberless stanzas in his verse where the simple diction and structure of prose seem to glide unawares into the most melodious poetry,—

> Ye banks and braes and streams around
> The castle o' Montgomery,

or, again, in different voice,

> Some books are lies frae end to end,
> And some great lies were never penn'd:
> Ev'n ministers, they hae been kend,
> In holy rapture,
> A rousing whid at times to vend,
> And nail't wi' Scripture.

The poetry of Burns is, indeed, so spontaneous and its charm so obvious and so homely that critical comment seems needless, almost impertinent. Yet this ability to set in poetry the beauty, humor, and pathos of a narrow and humble life, while you are actually living that life, so far from being a common endowment, is one of the very rarest. Some of Burns' Scottish admirers are inclined to resent the application of the title "peasant poet" to Burns, as seeming to imply that our estimate of him is based not so much upon the

absolute poetic value of what he did, as upon a wonder that in his circumstances he could do anything. He is to be thought of as a great poet, say they, not as a peasant poet. Well, he was a great poet; but it is also worthy of remark, I think, that he is the only great English poet who really stands among the people while he sings. Wordsworth in that famous preface of his insisted that poetry could best find its themes in the life of humble folk; yet Wordsworth always regarded that life from the outside with the eye of a reflective observer. Though the peasant might suggest thought to Wordsworth, Wordsworth was very far from thinking like the peasant. But Burns really shared the life he sang, both in its outward circumstance and its inward character. It is this which so endears him to the popular heart of Scotland. No poet is so beloved, I think, by his own countrymen. The most rigid righteous of Scotsmen have some words of sympathy and excuse for Robert Burns; the most prosaic and untuneful feel some responsive thrill at the music of his song. Nor is it only in Scotland that Burns is thus regarded. His verses are hardly less familiar or less dear to all English-speaking people. Few indeed are those who have read any English book at all, that do not know the moving lines of *Auld Lang Syne,* or *John Anderson, My Jo,* or *Flow Gently, Sweet Afton,* or *Highland Mary.*

But if Burns is a popular poet, he is a great poet, too. He belongs to the people, but he belongs also to the immortals. He has the first great gift of the poet, the gift to make life of deeper interest. His range of experience may not have been very wide: he had not the power, like Wordsworth, to lift us to heights of calm reflection where we get sight of those primal spiritual truths

> Which, be they what they may,
> Are yet the fountain light of all our day;

but no man gives us a more thrilling sympathy for all the common joys and sorrows of our human lot. No matter how narrow or how homely is the sphere in which this man's life must move, he throws himself into it with such abandon

as to make us feel afresh with him all the humor, the pathos, the passion, of living.

In this passionate intensity of the man resides, I take it, the chief fascination of his poetry. Whenever we get a glimpse of him, pouring some tender confidence into the ear of a rustic lass, or loudest in the song at the Masons' meeting in Tarbolton, or standing with kindling eyes in the midst of a ring of the dons and ladies of Edinburgh delighting them all by his eager converse, he is always all alive with some emotion. How warm and tender is the heart of him! His pathos is so simple and honest that it starts the tear before we are aware. His sympathies go even beyond the limits of humanity, and his pity stirs for the wounded hare that limps past him, or "ilk happing bird,—wee, helpless thing,"—that cowers its "chittering wing" beneath the winter's blast. There is all the tenderness and truth of long-tried friendship in his address to his Auld Mare Maggie:

> Monie a sair darg we twa hae wrought,
> An' wi' the weary warl' fought!
> An' monie an anxious day, I thought
> We wad be beat!
> Yet here to crazy age we're brought,
> Wi' something yet.
>
> An' think na, my auld, trusty servan',
> That now perhaps thou's less deservin,
> An' thy auld days may end in starvin,
> For my last fow,
> A heapit stimpart, I'll reserve ane
> Laid by for you,—

lines which are said to have drawn the tears and humanized the heart of an Edinburgh drayman.

And yet, when in another mood who takes his joys with so keen a relish? There is a buoyancy in his verse that gives a new zest to life. He sings—and perhaps it would have been well had he oftener sung—the humble joys of the cottager when

> Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin, stacher through
> To meet their dad, wi' flichterin' noise an' glee.

His wee bit ingle, blinkin bonilie,
His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty wifie's smile,
The lisping infant, prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labor and his toil.

And we set the verses in memory as our choicest picture of the "happy fireside clime of home." Or, when his fortunes glower, and fate has him in a corner, he daffs her aside with a careless humor most contagious,—

Whene'er I forgather wi' Sorrow and Care,
I gie them a skelp as they're creepin alang,
Wi' a cog o' guid swats and an auld Scottish sang.

I whyles claw the elbow o' troublesome Thought;
But Man is a soger, and Life is a faught.
My mirth and guid humour are coin in my pouch,
And my Freedom's my lairdship nae monarch daur touch.

It must be remembered that there is more humor in the poetry of Burns than any other English poet since Shakespeare can show. It is somewhat remarkable how little there is of that quality in any of that company of poets of whom he was the immediate predecessor. Burns' humor runs through a wide range of moods, from the bright archness of such songs as *Tam Glen* or *Duncan Gray*, through such droll waggery as that in *Death and Dr. Hornbook* or the *Address to the Deil*, to the rollicking fun of *Tam o' Shanter* and the wild carouse of *The Jolly Beggars*. But in all its moods there is the same bounding life, the same elastic force of spirit. It is never the humor of a cool and caustic man. Even in his satire there is nothing sullen or morose. He heartily dislikes what he chooses to think cant and hypocrisy and he heaps his ridicule upon it without stint:

Be to the poor like onie whunstane,
And haud their noses to the grunstane;
Ply ev'ry art o' legal thieving;
No matter—stick to sound believing.

But there is at all events something open and whole-souled even in his abuse. He never sulks and nurses a grudge to

keep it warm. His ridicule always has a basis of good nature. You remember that even from the Father of Lies himself he cannot part without a word of droll commiseration:

> But fare-you-weel, Auld Nickie-Ben!
> O, wad ye tak a thought an' men,
> Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—
> Still hae a stake:
> I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
> Ev'n for your sake!

In its odd mixture of waggish impudence and honest kindliness this seems to me quite inimitable. Such an irrepressible flow of good spirits is there in this man.

I fear it may be suggested that in some of his verse there is evidence of the flow of spirits of another kind. I suppose Burns has too much glorified the baleful power of Scotch drink, and I am not minded to put in any defense for him. Certainly I am no great lover of bacchanalian song myself; yet I must own myself an admirer not only of *Tam o' Shanter,* but even of *The Jolly Beggars,* though neither of them is among the work of Burns that I think we prize most. I judge neither of them, however, owes much to drink; it is rather the rushing, heedless tide of life in them that captivates our attention and carries us away by main force. But his humor is most to my liking when it is drawn from no grosser inspiration than his own exuberant joyousness. Such poems as *Hallowe'en* or *The Twa Dogs* are a pure and healthy exhilaration of soul.

This intensity of spirit is seen best, perhaps, in his songs, in his love-songs best of all. I think the love-songs of Burns are, on the whole, the best in the language. I could wish sometimes that there were a little more courtesy and deference with their ardency; they lack perhaps something of that reverence which must always hallow the best love of man for woman. But they lack nothing else. They have imagination, fire, tenderness, and the abandon of entire devotion. Earnest, simple, without a single note of affectation or prettiness, they gush warm from the heart. To say or to sing

some of these songs is to be young again, and to feel once more the unslackened pulse of early love and hope. To the end of time will lovers go a-wooing with these verses in their hearts.

And Burns has not only the poet's sensitiveness and intensity, but the poet's vision, too. His imagination is not very wide-ranging, I suppose, and it certainly is not serene and continuous. It is the imagination that gives us sudden vivid glimpses,—characteristically the lyric imagination. What he sees, he sees with wonderful clearness and truth. His remarkable terseness of phrase is owing often to this keenness of vision: he doesn't need to heap up epithets, he flashes his image before you in a single phrase. Do you remember the two lines in his *Address to the Deil*—untranslatable into English like most of his good things—in which he sees Auld Nick "on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin', Tirlin the kirks?" What startling distinctness in that glimpse of the Prince of the Power of the Air; as well as what perfect deviltry! Very beautiful are some of these vivid momentary gleams in his pathetic verse. Take for one example only two lines quoted by Carlyle from the song *Open the Door to Me, O*—

> The wan moon sets behind the white wave,
> And Time is setting with me, O.

In the sheer simplicity of mournful power they are quite in the manner of the greatest masters.

To these more distinctively poetic endowments we must add a great fund of common sense. He had the genuine Scottish interest in conduct, and a homely vigor of thought upon the concerns of life. It is almost surprising to note how large a part of the body of popular quotation from his work is made up of bits of pithy practical wisdom:

> To step aside is human;
>
> What's done we partly may compute,
> But know not what's resisted;

The heart ay's, the part ay
That makes us right or wrang;

O wad some power the giftie gie us,
To see oursels as ithers see us!

The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that.

In this ability to put plain truths into their final literary expression Burns reminds us now and then of Pope; only Pope's truths are neat specimens of pointed and polished satire, while Burns' homely maxims are warmed by good humor and winged by imagination.

And now if we unite all these qualities,—his power of simple yet most melodious verse; his quick sympathy with all the common joy and pain of life; his fulness and intensity of nature, manifesting itself now in melting pity and tenderness, now in humor ranging from bright archness to the wildest overflow of spirits; his vivid imagination; and his rugged Scottish vigor of intellect,—have we not in truth the endowment of a great poet? And when we remember that the poetry in which these powers are shown was all drawn from the experience of an unlettered young man among the humblest folk of a little Scottish parish, that it has no charm of culture or literary flavor, but holds us by its power to move those deep human feelings that belong alike to all, —then we shall understand why Robert Burns is not only a great poet, but *the* great popular poet. Surely no other English poet succeeded in writing before the age of twenty-seven so much verse of equal interest to the man of letters and the man of toil as Robert Burns had put into that little book he carried with him up to Edinburgh.

I shall not dwell at length upon the remaining chapter of Burns' story. For it seems to me, as I have already said, that his career as a man was virtually decided, and his career as a poet almost ended before he went up to Edinburgh at all.

What a sudden and brilliant triumph he had there we all know. Before he has been in Edinburgh a month he has

met most of the culture and fashion of the town. He dines with duchesses and he is stared at on the street. Jeffrey used to say he remembered that when he was a boy in his teens some one in a shop-door tapped him on the shoulder and pointed to a man on the street,—"Ay, lad, see him! Ye do well to look at yon man; that's Robbie Burns." I don't remember any case where literary fame has given such sudden social *éclat*.

There was doubtless a factitious element in this popularity. Fine sentiments about the equality of man and the nobility of humble virtue were very fashionable just then, not only in Paris but in Edinburgh, and here was a poet who illustrated these all in his own person. Yet in the main, I think, Burns' welcome to Edinburgh was based on a genuine appreciation of his work.

And in the main Burns bore himself very well among his great friends. He showed no silly vanity, he showed no embarrassment or affectation, only an occasional urgency of manner which arose from an uneasy consciousness of social differences. For Burns always felt himself outside that circle whose hospitalities were for a time so freely proffered him, and saw how his popularity was likely to end. He knew that what called itself the best society of Edinburgh would hardly admit to intimate membership a young fellow from Ayrshire whose entire earthly possessions amounted to some fifty pounds, and who leaves the drawing rooms of Princes Street to return at night to lodgings in Baxter's Close, Lawnmarket, hired in company with a lad from his native town at the price of three shillings a week. That knowledge was not cheering. He felt with bitterness that he was making many acquaintances, but few friends; and he felt with an added pang that these new friends belonged to a circle to which it seemed hopeless for him to aspire. Nothing in his new experiences, we may be sure, could have had a greater fascination for this young man than the society of refined and accomplished women, to which he had hitherto been quite a stranger. And yet of all those whom he met in the early months of his Edinburgh sojourn only one seems to have

proved herself a life-long friend to him. Miss Margaret Chalmers told the poet Campbell in after years that Burns had made her an offer of marriage—as he would probably have done to any young lady who honored him with her acquaintance for a week; Miss Chalmers declined the offer, wisely I suppose, but she must have done it graciously, too, for Burns always accounted her one of his truest friends. His letters to her are, I am sure, the best he ever wrote, and the very last song he ever penned with failing hand ten years later was one in which his thought went fondly back to that "fairest maid on Devon's banks." But one can imagine how some dream of a life in a society of intellect and culture may have made his past life look bleak and barren, and have deepened his aversion to a return to the plow.

Yet it is doubtless idle to blame his new admirers that they did nothing more for him. Still more idle is it, to rail, as Burns himself was sometimes inclined to, at the necessary inequalities of society. Certainly the poet who had sung, as no man ever had before, the nobility of toil, the charm of humble life and love, should not now have forgotten the lessons of his verse. Had he loved the truth, had he loved his art, had he loved anything well enough to make it steadily the end of his effort and his desire, his future might yet have been bright. But it was too late now. He had abandoned himself to his impulses so long that he had lost the power of singleness of aim, of fixed and resolute effort, and could only run here and there in an idle chase after enjoyment. And so he wasted a year in gossiping delays, in lazy, rambling summer tours through Scotland, and the next winter found him still in Edinburgh waiting aimlessly for something to turn up. It was during this winter that he had the long philandering correspondence with Clarinda. Mrs. McLehose was a plump, pleasant-mannered, most effusive person, just the poet's age. Her husband, unfortunately for all concerned, had left her rather shabbily, and gone to the West Indies; and Mrs. McLehose seemed to have wished him still farther away. Her feelings

were very tender and she always had an abundant supply of them. She quoted *The Sorrows of Werther;* she wrote verses on the "Friendship of the Heart," which Burns—Heaven pardon him!—pronounced worthy of Sappho; and she declared that "for many years" she "had sought for some male friend endowed with sentiments like yours; one who could love me with tenderness yet unmixed with selfishness: who could be my friend, companion, protector." She was withal very religious, and seems to have thought to steady a rather yielding temperament by a very rigid doctrine, though the union of the sentiment of Rousseau with the theology of Calvin makes a somewhat queer combination. She appears for some weeks to have written Burns a kind of sermon on Sunday evenings to correct the compliances of Saturday evenings. That Mrs. McLehose fell very much in love with Burns, one must admit, with a kind of pity for her; she was always trembling on the verge of such a catastrophe. But I question whether the answering affection of Burns was very deep. Surely some of Sylvander's letters to Clarinda are very unedifying reading indeed. For once this outspoken man can write mere cant and sentimental vaporing. I don't think Robert Burns shines in such composition as this:

> For instance, suppose you and I just as we are at present, the same reasoning powers, sentiments, and even desires; the same fond curiosity for knowledge and remarking observation in our minds—and imagine our bodies free from pain . . . imagine further that we were set free from the laws of gravitation which bind us to this globe, and could at pleasure fly, without inconvenience, through all the yet unconjectured bounds of creation—what a life of bliss should we lead in our mutual pursuit of virtue and knowledge, and our mutual enjoyment of friendship and love!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Don't you see us hand in hand, or rather my arm about your lovely waist, making our remarks on Sirius, the nearest of the fixed stars; or surveying a comet flaming innoxious by us, as we just now would mark the passing pomp of a travelling monarch; or in a shady bower of Mercury or Venus, dedicating the hour to love and mutual converse, relying honour, and revelling endearment—while the most exalted strains of poesy and harmony would be the ready, spontaneous language of our souls?

Burns kept up this sort of thing for some two months, but when in the spring, he resolved after some not very manly hesitation to fly—not to the nearest fixed star—but to Mauchline and take to himself Jean Armour to wife, as it was his duty to do, I don't think the parting with Clarinda cost him many pangs. The fact is, Burns told only truth when he said his heart had been aflame so many times that it was almost vitrified. No dissipation is so ruinous as the dissipation of the affections, and Burns had been throwing his away for years.

But in 1788 he began his last struggle to lead a healthful and ordered life. He turned his back on Edinburgh. He married his Jean. He leased a farm at Ellisland and set himself resolutely at work to make a home for her and his children. One sees, though, from such a letter as he wrote Peggy Chalmers, September 16, 1788—perhaps the most pathetic letter he ever wrote—that it was with many a longing, backward look that Burns left the city for his farm; and fears that it was duty rather than affection that drew him to his Jean. Still, it was much to have manfully accepted his duty; and for a little time hope brightened over his life. For the first time in his life he sat with wife and weans about his own fireside; he followed his plow on his own acres, and tasted for a time the joys of honest independence. As might have been expected, when his emotions grew healthy, the poetic inspiration returned in its old purity and freshness. It was at Ellisland he wrote *Tam Glen,* and *Auld Lang Syne,* and *Tam o' Shanter,* and *Mary in Heaven,* and some half a score more of his best songs. He said afterward it was the happiest period of his life. Who can help wishing that his checkered story might have ended here!

But the sky darkened very soon. The season was bad, and the soil was poor, he said. Very likely; but it is to be feared there were other reasons. Habits of thrift and hardy resolution cannot grow up in a day. After three years he gave up his farm altogether and removed to Dumfries.

In this dingy and vulgar town the last act in the tragedy of his life passed drearily to its close. He did his work as an exciseman faithfully; but the promotion he hoped for did not come. Those were the feverish days of the French Revolution, and Burns was always at heart in sympathy with the popular cause. It was in these last days that he wrote that really great song which may be called the first manifesto of the revolutionary spirit in English poetry, *A Man's a Man for A' That*. But his liberal sentiments did not recommend him for promotion. Envious people spread rumors that Robert Burns, with the King's commission in his pocket, had been drinking to "the last chapter of the last book of Kings." Many of his companions were of a sort to do him little good, and he felt himself deserted by better folk. One remembers Lockhart's oft-told story of the street full of fine ladies and gentlemen on their way to the Dumfries ball, who all passed by on the other side with no word of recognition for the fallen poet. "Nay, nay," said Burns to a friend who suggested that he join them, "Nay, nay, that's all over now"; and after a pause quoted the old Scotch ballad,—

> Oh were we young as we ance hae been
> We suld hae been gallopin down on yon green,
> An linkin it owre the lily-white lea—
> And werena my heart light, I wad dee.

Now and then as the clouds that hung low about him parted for a moment he broke out in some note of pure and touching song; but his habit of inspiration had fled. The brightness, the elasticity had gone out of his life. The blue sky, the song of birds, the scent of new mown hay in sunny fields, these were exchanged for the clink of glasses and the reek of whisky in the dirty tap room of the Globe Tavern. His health broke down; his genial spirits failed. He sank from bad to worse till the end came. He died prematurely old at thirty-seven.

As we think upon him we need not forget the stern truth his story proves too well, that the kindest heart and the most

generous impulses cannot save from disaster a life that will not own a steady allegiance to duty. Still less need we admit that the greatness of the poet was due to the weakness of the man. On the contrary, his faults as a man are precisely the faults that shut him out from the little company of the very greatest poets. He lacked something of that moral earnestness, that calm elevation of spirit, that appreciation of the deepest truth which set a man highest among the immortal singers. His emotions, too, on which the lyric power depends, jaded by a life of irregular impulse soon lost something of their vernal purity; they kept the fire but lost the dew of youth. But while we need not forget these things, we may remember—nay, we must remember—how strait were the barriers within which fate had decreed this passionate nature should be confined, how long was his struggle, and how much that was honest and noble and tender he kept in his life till the end. How much that was honest, I say,—for even when he refused to do his duty, he would not deny it, nor excuse himself by confusing all distinction of right and wrong; how much that was noble,—noble scorn for meanness and injustice, noble admiration for courage and independence and all the sturdy virtues of manhood; above all, how much that was tender in love for brother man and sister woman, in great charity for the sins and pity for the sorrows of our human lot.

And it is these virtues, shown alike in his life and in his song, that have so endeared his verse to all who know our English tongue.

No poet, I often think, has so enviable a fame as he. The verses dear alike to scholar and to peasant, the verses that speak the universal passions of the heart, and spring unbidden to the lips of all men in hours of sadness and in moments of the wildest mirth; the verses that are part of the household song of a race, sung by thousands who have not even learned to read them: such verses as these Robert Burns has written. And who else has written such? Let us think of him gratefully; whatever his failings, he was the most human of poets:

Through busiest street and loneliest glen
Are felt the flashes of his pen;
He rules 'mid winter snows, and when
Bees fill their hives;
Deep in the general heart of men
His power survives.

JOHN RUSKIN

THE last of the great generation of English men of letters who brightened the mid-nineteenth century is gone.[1] John Ruskin is dead. He outlived all his eminent contemporaries in literature,—Carlyle, Arnold, Browning, Tennyson,—he outlived himself. For it was Ruskin's hard fortune to see the decline of his own influence and to know that the writings of his later years, on which he himself laid most emphasis, were received by the public with indifference or sometimes with derision. He finished his work in discouragement more than ten years ago; his power began to decline, and he passed the last decade of life in pathetic silence and seclusion, slowly forgetting a world that seemed already to have forgotten him. But it is a matter of frequent observation that a great reputation gained during one generation is liable to temporary decline during the next. Public opinion and standards of taste slowly change; or men become used to the novel powers that surprised and charmed at first, and their attention is withdrawn to new aspirants for literary honors. After a time, however, these smaller men drop out of notice, while the true proportions of the great man's work grow more evident; a second and juster fame is accorded him, and he takes his place as a classic. So will it be, we are assured, with Mr. Ruskin. When the twentieth century shall have made up its verdict on the nineteenth, he will be accounted not as merely a brilliant erratic genius, but as one of the wisest teachers of his age and a master of English unsurpassed in any age.

The latter title to fame may be considered as already established. Even those who reject Ruskin's teachings ad-

[1] This paper was published as a commemorative essay at the time of Ruskin's death. See Prefatory Note, p. xi. [L. B. G.]

mit the wonderful charm of his style. His only rival for the foremost place as master of English prose in the nineteenth century is Thomas Carlyle. The manner of the two men was indeed very different. Carlyle wrote always with tremendous difficulty—language, as it were, torn out of him in an agony; and it seems still to bear the marks of those throes of composition. His speech is rugged, irregular, setting at naught all the rules of the smooth rhetorician; but no more valorous, hard-hitting English was ever written, and some of his best descriptive passages in *The French Revolution* have a lurid, imaginative vividness almost preternatural—like what we see in dreams. Ruskin's writing departs much less widely in structure from conventional standards, and shows greater mastery of the mechanics of the rhetorical art; yet it is no less original than Carlyle's, and it is far more spontaneous and opulent. His style has all those inner qualities which make writing noteworthy,—continuous and brilliant imagination, eager enthusiasm, and a rapidity of mental movement which gives to his most purely descriptive passages the constant play and glance of life. Then he has an undercurrent of humor, with a tinge of sarcasm, which in his later writings is often something more than a tinge, but which always gives pungency and piquancy to his style. Both Carlyle and Ruskin have often been charged with a lack of temperance; but the charge has more force against Carlyle than against Ruskin, and is much exaggerated in both cases; for temperance and chasteness are not universally virtues of style. In the statement of facts, indeed, precision is always the first requisite; but in the expression of emotion there is, strictly speaking, no such thing as precision. Nor is there any reason why prose writing should keep a pedestrian pace on the low levels of narrative and exposition; the loftier attitudes of emotion are not above the proper path of prose. But such impassioned prose cannot be cool and measured in manner; and, while it will always avoid the formal rhythm and cadence of verse, it will inevitably take on something of the charm of music and image which we commonly associate with poetry.

Now, of this impassioned prose Ruskin was the greatest master in our literature. No man since Jeremy Taylor has known how to write an English so rich in beautiful imagery or with such subtle and varied rhythmical effects. Yet his writing never suggests that artful elaboration which is inconsistent with earnestness. It is no such inflated and grandiose product as DeQuincey's bastard prose-poetry. Ruskin's luxuriance is always spontaneous, and his most elaborate passages seem naturally conformed at every point to the flexure of his thought or feeling. His style, though profuse, is never diffuse—which is a very different thing; for diffuseness usually proceeds from the fact that the writer has but few ideas and is trying to hammer them out as thin as possible, while profuseness comes from the abundance of illustrative or accessory ideas that come crowding thickly about a central thought and press for utterance. Nor did Ruskin's profusion ever betray him into carelessness. With all his wealth of diction, he would not throw away a word,—he would not use a word at random. Indeed, the most remarkable thing about his language is the combination of exuberance with precision. He used to insist on this precision of phrase as one of the surest tests of literary eminence,[1] and his own choice of words was always made with the greatest nicety. Even in his most gorgeous passages, when he might seem to be throwing the reins upon the neck of his rhetoric, his phrase will be found to be exquisitely fitted to the fact or the feeling. If you try to say the same thing more simply you will find that your expression is not only tame and colorless but really less accurate.

His mastery is probably seen best in some of his descriptive passages. Description, whether in prose or verse, is usually a weariness. Language is ill suited to render the charm of color or form. But sometimes the union of imagination and emotion with the rarest art can set before us in words a scene as vividly as any painter can picture it, and with a thrilling spiritual sense of its meaning such as no painter can ever give. Ruskin's work is full of such pas-

[1] See, for example, *Sesame and Lilies*, Lecture I.

sages. He had a minute and accurate observation, so that his description seems always exactly true. He had the keenest feeling for beauty everywhere, and especially for its analogies and suggestions,—for those large spiritual truths of which beauty was to him the outward form and symbol; so that his description, even in its loftiest flights, seems never extravagant or labored, but only some expression of that emotion which, when sincere, cannot be exaggerated, since it is infinite in nature and therefore in its fulness ineffable. How shall a man exaggerate the peace of summer evenings or the solemnity of the star-sown midnight sky? But, beside all this, Ruskin had in almost unprecedented degree that sense of form which alone can render feeling articulate. He chose his words, as we have said, with the utmost nicety; but he knew that the meaning of words in combination is indefinitely varied and intensified by their movement and music. In fact, such prose as Ruskin's illustrates, quite as well as music can, all the effects of tone and rhythm and cadence. His page is sprinkled thick with alliteration, assonance, and all subtle adaptations of sound to sentiment; yet the whole is wrought so spontaneously and is so brought into subservience to the dominant emotion that all these detailed felicities of art are lost in the total impression. The limits of this paper will not permit extended quotation, but we may be allowed a single passage. It will show the delicacy of Ruskin's art all the better that it is not one of his purple patches, but is descriptive of the most unobtrusive forms of vegetable life,—mosses and lichens. Yet what microscopic nicety of observation and felicity of epithet are found in the quotation, what fine sense of emotional values, and what a solemn grace of movement,—especially in the last paragraph, where the soft, open vowels and the slow-paced liquids and sibilants keep step with the gentle pathos of the thought and then die gradually away in the lingering cadence of the closing lines:

> Meek creatures! the first mercy of the earth, veiling with hushed softness its dintless rocks; creatures full of pity, covering with strange and tender honour the scarred disgrace of ruin,—laying quiet finger

on the trembling stones to teach them rest. No words that I know of will say what these mosses are. None are delicate enough, none perfect enough, none rich enough. How is one to tell of the rounded bosses of furred and beaming green,—the starred divisions of rubied bloom, fine-filmed, as if the Rock-Spirits could spin porphyry as we do glass,—the traceries of intricate silver, and fringes of amber, lustrous, arborescent, burnished through every fiber into fitful brightness and glossy traverses of silken change, yet all subdued and pensive, and framed for simplest, sweetest offices of grace. They will not be gathered, like the flowers, for chaplet or love-token; but of these the wild bird will make its nest, and the wearied child his pillow.

And, as the earth's first mercy, so they are its last gift to us. When all other service is vain, from plant and tree, the soft mosses and gray lichen take up their watch by the head-stone. The woods, the blossoms, the gift-bearing grasses, have done their part for a time, but these do service for ever. Trees for the builder's yard, flowers for the bride's chamber, corn for the granary, moss for the grave.

Yet as in one sense the humblest, in another they are the most honored of the earth-children. Unfading as motionless, the worm frets them not, and the autumn wastes not. Strong in lowliness, they neither blanch in heat nor pine in frost. To them, slow-fingered, constant-hearted, is entrusted the weaving of the dark, eternal tapestries of the hills; to them, slow-pencilled, iris-dyed, the tender framing of their endless imagery. Sharing the stillness of the unimpassioned rock, they share also its endurance; and while the winds of departing spring scatter the white hawthorn blossom like drifted snow, and summer dims on the parched meadow the drooping of its cowslip-gold,—far above, among the mountains, the silver lichen-spots rest, starlike, on the stone; and the gathering orange stain upon the edge of yonder western peak reflects the sunsets of a thousand years.[1]

Ruskin's manner changed, about 1860, with his change of subject. It grew more simple, direct, and, in his latest writings, colloquial. To the last, indeed, he retained his power of lavishly beautiful description, as passages in the *Præterita* will show; but he was used to speak disparagingly of that kind of writing, and seemed vexed that the public should any longer care for it while they refused to listen to weightier matters. When he revised the second volume of *Modern Painters,* in 1882, he ruthlessly cut away all the de-

[1] *Modern Painters,* Vol. V, Part VI, Chap. X.

scriptive portions of the book, leaving only that part which contained his theory of beauty. But if in his later style there is less luxuriance of imagery, there is the same glow of feeling, the same charm of movement and music. The *Unto this Last* (1862), which marks the turning point in his career, is a treatise on economics, compact, closely reasoned, without a line of mere rhetoric, and yet filled with restrained energy and moving with a noble rhythm that recalls the best passages of Scripture. *The Crown of Wild Olive,* four years later,—which Ruskin himself was inclined to call his best book,—while it is chaste in manner, is one of the best specimens of genuine eloquence, that is, of impassioned appeal, in nineteenth century literature. It may be admitted that, at least in his later years, his zeal often became intemperate. The preacher got the better of the artist, and his style lost the balance and self-possession that mark work we call classic. To him the world verily seemed slipping into contented or scornful forgetfulness of the things that make for righteousness and peace; and he may well be forgiven if his voice sometimes rose into despairing remonstrance or denunciation. But it never rings hollow. Even in the most extravagant passages of the *Fors Clavigera* we never catch the note of rhetorical resonance. His opinions may be wrong; his fears may be groundless; his condemnation may be unjust: but he is as sincere as Jeremiah. Such intense moral earnestness, joined with such supreme command of the literary art, would suffice to keep alive the writing of any man, even if the ideas underneath it were fundamentally mistaken—witness the case of Shelley. But the leading ideas of Ruskin are not mistakes. In reality he has been one of the great teachers of the last generation.

Up to 1860 all of Ruskin's writing was concerned more or less directly with the two arts of painting and architecture. It is the period of the *Modern Painters* (1843–1860), *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (1849), and *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853). These three books awakened general interest in the art of northern Italy, so that for half a century past the English-speaking traveler has been

trying—often, it must be confessed, with grievous effort—to see things through Ruskin's spectacles. He did more than any other one man to secure sincere and intelligent admiration for several early Italian painters hardly known in England before,—Giotto, Fra Angelico, Botticelli, Carpaccio. Yet the permanent value of these books as contributions to either the theory, the history, or the criticism of art is doubtful. The first was undertaken in defense of Turner, the other two in defense of a theory; and all three were written in the temper of the advocate rather than in the temper of the student. Ruskin is never dispassionate. His youthful enthusiasm is captivating, but his opinions are sometimes of the high *a priori* sort, and depend for their proof mostly on a splendid confidence of statement. He is prone to large generalization on the basis of his own tastes, and sometimes mistakes a poetic fancy for an eternal truth. In particular, his disposition to measure art by moral standards—on which, to be sure, the value of all his work largely depends—often warps his judgment; and even those of us most in sympathy with his principles must admit that his ethics and æsthetics now and then get oddly mixed. Moreover, his appreciation is limited; there are fields of art—Greek art, for example—for which he has very inadequate feeling. Painters and architects will tell you that he is romantic, capricious, antiquarian; that he gives them little aid in adapting a vital and progressive art to the needs of to-day.

All this is doubtless true. But Ruskin was not a painter or an architect; he was not, we think, primarily a critic of those arts. He was a man of letters. His writing, like all literature, was addressed not to the trained intellect of a class, but to the larger interests of men. It will be measured not by its technical accuracy, but by the volume of perennial truth and emotion it embodies. Now the great service of Ruskin to the world in these early volumes may be summed up in the statement that he taught us, more impressively than any other writer of the generation, the spiritual value of material things. There are three ways, and only three,

in which we may regard any outward thing—say, a tree: first, the practical or material way, as so much timber, or fuel, or fruit; second, the intellectual or scientific way, as an organism with laws of structure and growth to be studied; third, the ethical or moral way, as an immediate cause of joy, a thing of beauty. The third, of course, is Ruskin's way. It was the work of a great part of his life to show that this point of view is as natural as either of the other two, and far more important. For all material uses are only means. What we call useful things seem merely to prolong life; but what is life itself for? Beauty, on the other hand, is an end in itself. The highest and most essential office, therefore, of all material things is to minister to our sense of beauty; that is what they are for. The end of the tree is not its seed, which can only reproduce its life or prolong ours, but its flower and its leaf. Yet it is not easy to persuade men of this. In truth, most of us cannot habitually think so. Beauty for us is a pleasing accident, the ornament or life, but no part of its object. The outer world, we say, is stuff for use, to be wrought into food, or raiment, or shelter. Perhaps the constant struggle for existence makes it inevitable that this should be our mode of thought, and more inevitable as the struggle grows more desperate; so, at all events, it is. We purchase what we call convenience and utility with hardly a thought of their cost in beauty. Our traffic and manufactures may excoriate the landscape, blacken the skies, and pollute the streams; but if any man protest we brand him as a sentimentalist. Nor is it only the ruder mass of men that hold beauty cheap in any computation of the goods of life. Men of science engaged in study of the laws of nature, men who would scorn to estimate things by gross material values, have a superior disregard for what they deem mere æsthetics. Truth, they say,—meaning by truth facts of relation and succession among phenomena,—is higher than beauty; forgetting that one class of phenomena, as truly facts of observation as any other, has a unique power upon our spiritual nature which puts them above other facts. "Beauty

is truth," as Keats said, and it is a higher than scientific truth. It was the work of Ruskin not only to protest with impassioned eloquence against the perversion of view which ranks the means above the ends of life, but so to open the eyes and touch the hearts of men that they might estimate at its true worth the beauty of the world.

This he did partly by the marvelous vividness and fidelity of his descriptions, of which we have already spoken. The *Modern Painters* was designed to prove the truth of Turner's painting, and to this end Ruskin was led to the careful study of all those natural forms which Turner had depicted. This determined his method. Nature, of course, is the frequent theme of modern poetry; but the poets do not describe. They rather suggest, without detail, some aspects of the object in which its emotional power resides. The characteristic of Ruskin's writing, on the other hand, is the union of intense emotions with minute descriptive detail. He feels like a poet; he observes like a naturalist. And this minute observation ranges over almost the whole vast spectacle of nature, from the tumult of storm about the white summits of the Alps to the veinings of a leaf in the wayside hedge. We do not know which to admire the more, the somber majesty of such a picture as that of the mountains piled above Martigny,[1] or the delicate grace of the soldanella [2] in Swiss meadows breaking through the melting snows of May. No other book records so many visible phenomena of beauty or grandeur—the clouds and the sky; the sternness of mountain and the softness of valley; waters as they hurry or linger in rivers, and as they toss in the waves of the sea; the lone pine tree on the Alpine crag visited only by the winds and stars, and the gadding vine wreathed above the lowland peasant's door—all shown us with a beauty and a precision unfelt before.

But the deepest power of all Ruskin's writing on nature or on art proceeds from his feeling of the significance of beauty. Beauty, as Ruskin conceives it, is an appeal not

[1] *Modern Painters,* Part V, Chap. XIX.
[2] *Ibid.,* Part III, Chap. XII.

to our sensuous, or our intellectual, but to our moral, nature. An object is beautiful not because it gives us certain sense-impressions of form and color,—which are presumably the same in the lower animals as in us,—or because of pleasurable experiences personal or inherited which are bound up with it, but because it directly suggests ultimate moral qualities to be found in perfection only in divine nature. Beauty thus becomes a typical language, of which the symbols are sense-impressions, but the meaning is read off by our moral perceptions. The first half of the second volume of the *Modern Painters*—the only volume thought by Ruskin worthy of preservation—is devoted to an extended exposition of this theory. A summary statement of it, in the compass of a single sentence, may be cited from the *Stones of Venice:* "I have long believed that in whatever has been made by the Deity externally delightful to the human sense of beauty there is some type of God's nature or of God's laws." Certain combinations of form and color, for example, are beautiful because they suggest Infinity, or the divine incomprehensibility,—as the line of a high horizon defined against a bare sky, "the level twilight behind purple hills, or the scarlet edge of dawn over the dark sea," or any effects of calm, luminous distance. Other material forms suggest repose, or the divine permanence; still others, symmetry, or the divine justice. Doubtless this theory would not be accepted by any modern psychologist as a scientific explanation of the genesis and nature of our sense of beauty. It explains the earlier notion by the later, the simpler by the more complex. Yet our feeling of an analogy between material and moral qualities, on which the theory is based, is matter of universal experience and imbedded in our common forms of speech. The emotions we feel in the presence of a beautiful object seem always largely moral, and in our endeavor to express such emotion by describing its cause we instinctively apply to the object not sensuous but moral epithets; we call it not red, or gray, or long, or rounded, but quiet, peaceful, gracious, gentle. And the more profound or intense that complex emotion which we

call the sense of beauty, the more largely will it be found to be made up of moral elements.

But whatever the philosophic value of such a theory as this, it is evident that to a man like Ruskin, of deep religious sensibilities, prone to see in all the powers and aptitudes of our nature proof of a divine purpose, it would give a peculiar intensity and seriousness to the charm of the external world. To him beauty is not merely a delightful but a holy thing,—a revelation of the nature of the Infinite, gracious as his love, awful as his law. This is the secret of the strange power of much of his writing. It is suffused with an emotion hardly found before in English prose. Beauty had, indeed, often reminded pious writers of the divine benevolence, but only because, like our appetites, it ministers to our physical pleasure; there is no thought of its apocalyptic character. But it is impossible to read passages like that quoted above without realizing that the beauty of the world means something more than the mere sensuous thrill which flatters eye or ear.

But it is not merely in Ruskin's passages of natural description that this conviction of the moral import of beauty is felt; it is this which gives such high ethical value to all his writing upon art. Art may be briefly defined as the attempt of the artist to reproduce in another the emotion he himself has felt in the presence of beauty. If he be painter or sculptor, he gives permanence to combinations of form and color that are transient, and so immortalizes the vision of his best moments. If he be man of letters, unable to reproduce in language sensible beauty save only in imperfect way through memory and imagination, he will endeavor to reproduce the suggestions of the object and to interpret its spiritual meanings. But in either case the value of the product will, in the last analysis, be measured by the rank and intensity of the moral emotions it awakens. To this ethical standard Ruskin brings every work of art. He had no patience with the modern cry of "art for art's sake." He cared little—perhaps too little—for mere technique. He rails at the waste of time and skill over marvelous effects

of light on a bunch of carrots or the inside of a brass kettle; he did not hesitate to arraign the most vaunted specimens of Italian art for their lack of truth in imagination and sincerity of feeling. Perhaps he carried this method of judgment too far; perhaps his opinions were sometimes fantastic and his verdicts perverse, though we, for one, confess to a delight in his strictures even of the "kicking gracefulness" of Raphael's "Transfiguration"; but it is certain that this constant insistence on ethical standards gives a value to his work that more narrowly critical writing could never have.

It is not easy, indeed, to overestimate the services of Ruskin to the development of English art. He began to write at a time when it is hardly too much to say that there was no English art. All the best English painters since his day,—Hunt, Millais, Leighton, Rossetti, Burne Jones,—though in no strict sense his disciples, and often differing with him violently, nevertheless have owed their inspiration largely to the romantic feeling, the fertility of suggestion, and the nobility of ideal in the writing of Ruskin. He did not found a school, but he did more than any one else to start a movement. The history of English art for the last half of the nineteenth century without mention of John Ruskin would be the play of *Hamlet* with Hamlet left out. Not less potent has been his influence in a general quickening of the popular artistic sense. When the first volume of *Modern Painters* appeared, public taste in England was at its nadir. It was the era of ugliness in architecture, in household decorations, in all the surroundings of daily life. We are still a great way from that simplicity and elegance which a true ideal of beauty in the arts of household use demands, but we have made a great advance since 1850.

But the chief value of Ruskin's writing throughout this period of his life—as, indeed, through all his life—is ethical. Like all great literature, it is concerned with those broad truths of human nature on which the laws both of art and of morals are based. Thus, whatever his theme, before he is through with it he is sure to turn out a moralist.

Nothing he has done is of more importance than this constant emphasis of the relation between conduct and artistic feeling, and the consequent *duty* of cultivating good taste. To many worthy, pious folk, especially in the evangelical section of society, with which Ruskin by birth and education was most closely connected, this must have seemed a fantastic and dangerous doctrine. Material beauty in any of its forms was most naturally deemed by them a snare, and overmuch admiration of it a proof of worldliness, a pampering of the carnal man. And it is common for all of us to speak slightingly of "matters of taste" as having nothing to do with moral choice. Nor is this tendency without some reason. In fact, any over-ardency of admiration for sensible loveliness unaccompanied by a feeling for its spiritual meanings does easily pass into sentimentalism or animalism; even in the finest natures, like that of Keats, for instance, it is justly thought an indication of some lack of moral symmetry; while as for taste, the raptures of the æsthetes, for a little while in the seventies, over their ballades and blue china provoked the ridicule of all sensible people, and were fitly laughed away in *Patience*. But these perversities or follies are not to be charged against the teaching of Ruskin. If taste be merely the caprice of personal choice between trivial things—a nice judgment in bric-a-brac—then, indeed, it is no matter to make a gospel of. But if, on the contrary, taste be a wise choice among the pleasures of life, the ability to perceive and enjoy what was divinely intended for our enjoyment, then the difference between good taste and bad taste goes to the very roots of our nature. And it does. Ruskin is quite right when he says, "The first, last, and closest trial question to any living creature is, 'What do you like?' Tell me what you like, and I'll tell you what you are." It is not so much what a man does that reveals his character—his doing may be determined by convention or constraint; nor yet what he believes —his belief may be mostly matter of accident or inheritance; it is what he enjoys. This decides his ideals and his desires. What, then, can be more clearly a duty than to re-

fine and elevate the tastes of men, to teach them to love the beauty God made to be loved? And if that be, as Ruskin insists, always somehow the type and suggestion of infinite virtue, the love of it will surely cleanse our affections and lift our thoughts. Nay, it will always be true that any perfect vision of it is possible only to the pure in heart who see God:

> You may answer or think, "Is the liking for outside ornaments,—for pictures, or statues, or furniture, or architecture, a moral quality?" Yes, most surely, if a rightly set liking. Taste for *any* pictures or statues is not a moral quality, but taste for good ones is. . . . That is an entirely moral quality—it is the taste of the angels. And all delight in fine art, and all love of it, resolve themselves into simple love of that which deserves love. That deserving is the quality we call loveliness—(we ought to have an opposite word, "hateliness," to be said of the things which deserve to be hated); and it is not an indifferent nor optional thing whether we love this or that; but it is just the vital function of all our being. What we *like* determines what we *are,* and is the sign of what we are; and to teach taste is inevitably to form character.

It is this deep sense of ethical values that gives to all Ruskin's writing on art at once its breadth of interest and its impassioned earnestness. No other modern English preacher of righteousness is half so eloquent, or has half his power to arouse and inspire. He brings to the discussion of the most technical subjects a keen analysis of moral motive, a freshness of thought on the highest concerns of life, and an ardor of aspiration after whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, such as will be sought in vain in any other literary prose of the nineteenth century. And it was because he came to believe with ever-deepening conviction that the social and economic conditions of England were making it impossible any longer for the great majority of men to have any enjoyment in their work or any share in the real goods of life that, at the summit of his career, he turned away from art, gave up his fame and fortune, put by his plans, exchanged admiration for obloquy, and for the space of twenty years ceased not to exhort, to warn, to de-

nounce, till he deemed his mission hopeless and sank into the long, mute twilight that preceded his death.

Had Ruskin died early in 1860 he would be remembered to-day as the greatest master of English prose in the century, any extravagances quite forgotten in the breadth of his knowledge and the marvelous beauty of his style. But in that year[1] appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine* the *Unto This Last: Four Essays on the First Principles of Political Economy,* followed in the next decade by a series of books and addresses attacking in very outspoken fashion accepted economic theory and social practice based on it. Originality and boldness had been all very well in the criticism of art; to carry them into the field of practical business—that was a different matter. The man who had just succeeded in winning the applause of the British public now found himself decried as a visionary whose benevolent but mischievous fanaticism would undermine the foundations of society. His enthusiasm for what seemed sweeping social heresies was accounted proof of radical unsoundness of judgment; and some of his former admirers began to doubt the wisdom even of his earlier work. To this day he is thought of by many people as an æsthetic sentimentalist who wrote some very beautiful things, but who in his late years worked himself into a state of mind because steam-engines make a hideous noise and factories litter the landscape with their refuse or darken the sky with their smoke.

But æsthetic sentimentalism does not inspire such self-forgetful effort as filled the last years of Ruskin's active life; nor can æsthetic sentimentalism teach such profound and impassioned truths of the relation of man to his fellows and his God as fill the pages of Ruskin's later books. And, whatever their lack of philosophic system, their occasional false emphasis or visionary suggestion, these books contain a message which the next age will have to heed—nay, which the present age is already beginning to heed. Whoever in

[1] The two Manchester lectures on the "Political Economy of Art"—afterward reprinted under the title, *A Joy Forever*—were first published in 1857; but they rather presage Ruskin's economic opinions than give a systematic statement of them.

1950 looks over the literature of a century will see that *Unto This Last,* like Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus,* is one of the books that mark an era, for it announced the rise of a new social spirit. It was not love of art that wrote these later books, it was love of man. It was, indeed, Ruskin's study of art that led directly to his attack upon social conditions. The result of all that study had been to teach him that a great art is possible only in a healthy society; that the condition of national taste depends largely on the condition of national morals,—*The Stones of Venice* had been written expressly to prove these propositions. The converse, then, must be true. There must be something radically wrong in a state of society which made great art impossible, in an economic and social system that degraded the tastes of men at once by shutting them off from many of the best pleasures of life and by making them blind to the few that were left. And this, Ruskin thought, was just what was doing in the England of his day. His grief and indignation over some of the more remote and indirect results of the industrial system were not, as is so often charged, proofs of an idle sentimentalism. If beauty be of real moral value, it could not be a matter of merely sentimental regret that the fairest region in England was ravaged of beauty in sky and stream and earth till it became familiarly known as the "Black Country." Still less could it be a matter of indifference that half the people of England were huddled in the squalor and ugliness of large towns. Or, again, consider Ruskin's much-derided protests against machinery. One of the chief joys of all men ought certainly to be in their work, the joy in what they make or do; art, in fact, is the result of that motive in its purest form—something made solely for the delight of making, without thought of future. If a man take no joy in his work, either in the process itself or in his foresight of the finished product, then his work, no matter how high his wage, is drudgery. Some such drudgery doubtless there must be; but the man all of whose work is of that sort is a slave. Now to such slavery, Ruskin asserted, the perfection of machinery and

consequent minute subdivision of labor had reduced vast numbers of English workmen. The grievance is not so much that the workman is poorly paid, fed, or housed,—although all that is too often true,—it is that he cannot possibly find pleasure in his work. He makes nothing. He stands all day before a machine almost as intelligent as himself, and repeats endlessly a few muscular movements, pulls a lever or pushes a bar. This is his "work." It is insane to say that any intelligent creature can take joy of it. The man inevitably comes to think of his pleasure, therefore, as something apart from his work, incompatible with work; and this, in four cases out of five, means moral death. We have become so familiar with this tendency in the last forty years, and with its influence on our operative class, that we regard it with unconcern, as part of the necessary hardship of life. But surely it is not sentimentality to feel the pity of it. Said an eminent American ecclesiastic in a public address the other day, after describing the work he saw a young man doing in a factory: "No wonder that at nighttime he drank, gambled, and fought. He had to; otherwise he would go mad. How many of us would stand this and not cry out? Not one of us but would become a striker, myself among the first!" We may not agree with Ruskin that we had best give up most of our machines and go back to hand labor; the remedy must probably lie in quite another direction. But we need not brand as fanaticism that passionate humanitarianism which demanded some change in an industry that made "goods" only by unmaking men, and increased what it called value only at cost of all the real wealth of life.

Ruskin's real attack was directed not against any such incidental or secondary results of the modern industrial system, but against the set of economic principles which by common consent were supposed to govern most of the relations of men. Political economy is usually defined as the science of wealth; and by wealth is meant the sum of material things having exchangeable value. Political economy, then, is the science of the acquisition and exchange of ma-

terial things—a purely commercial science. Moreover, it proceeds on certain assumptions, dignified by the name of "laws," which exclude moral considerations altogether. It assumes that, if I am buying, I shall buy as cheaply as I can, whether labor or product; that, if I am selling either labor, or product, I shall sell as dearly as I can,—the sole motive in either case, being gain in material things. That is, it is the scientific expression of some forms of human selfishness. There may be no objection to such a science as this, if it keep within its own sphere and be recognized as merely what it is, a body of practical laws derived from assumed principles. If we do so and so, such and such things will follow; which reasoning leaves it quite an open question whether we ought to do so and so. If we assume that two and two make five, we can logically go on to conclude that four and four make ten; but the body of laws derived from our first assumption will hardly fit the computations of real life. Yet, in practice, it seems to be taken for granted that the most important dealings of men with each other in organized society—not only the acquisition of wealth, but, secondarily, the social conditions and opportunities largely determined by wealth—must all be governed by this science of political economy. The only motive supposed to be operative is the self-interest of the individual; whatever hardship or inequality may result, no obstacle must be placed in the way of that. Government exists chiefly to secure to every man his liberty and his rights; that is, to see that he is let alone and allowed to make the most of all his powers in the struggle for existence. We may not by superior strength strangle our neighbor, out of hate for him; but we may by superior shrewdness starve him, out of love for ourselves.

Now, against this hard economic theory Ruskin urged three principal objections. First, and foremost, he protested in the name of humanity and religion against this stolid enthronement of the "Goddess of Getting-on" as the only possible ruler over a large part of human action. No science can pretend to govern the actions of Christian men which is not a moral science; yet this so-called political

economy takes it for granted that three fourths of human conduct is not to be measured by moral standards. It makes the law of supply and demand the sole *nexus* between social beings, and practically excludes ethical motives from economic discussion. The pretended laws of such a science, Ruskin asserts, are not laws at all, nor must they be accepted as rules of conduct. We shall buy in the cheapest market? That depends on what makes the market cheap. We are at liberty to invest our capital where it will bring the highest rates of interest? No; not if such investment means to condemn many people to work on the lowest living wage, while we sit still and enjoy the fruit of their labor; to condemn them, moreover, to work that is cheerless, carried on in debasing conditions, and resulting in product often excessive and sometimes really valueless. We must be allowed free competition? Certainly not, if free competition means that we are permitted by our superior shrewdness to shut up every avenue of advance to our rivals and crush all weaker competitors. Cries Ruskin:

> You would be indignant if you saw a strong man walk into a theater or lecture room and, calmly choosing the best place, take his feeble neighbor by the shoulder, and turn him out of it into the back seats, or the street. You would be equally indignant if you saw a stout fellow thrust himself up to a table where some hungry children were being fed, and reach his arm over their heads and take their bread from them. But you are not the least indignant if, when a man has stoutness of thought and swiftness of capacity, and, instead of being long-armed only, has the much greater gift of being long-headed —you think it perfectly just that he should use his intellect to take the bread out of the mouths of all the other men in the town who are of the same trade with him; or use his breadth and sweep of sight to gather some branch of the commerce of the country into one great cobweb, of which he is himself to be the central spider, making every thread vibrate with the points of his claws, and commanding every avenue with the facets of his eyes. You see no injustice in this.[1]

Not that Ruskin contemplated any such thing as economic equality among men. He never advocated any leveling scheme to prevent the accumulation of wealth in the

[1] *A Joy Forever*, § 117.

hands of individuals. There must always be the rich and the poor. In so far as these inequalities result from differences in industry, economy,—in a word, from moral differences,—they are wholesome examples of moral law; they would exist in an ideal state. In so far as they result from differences of native ability or unavoidable circumstance, they are misfortunes to be minimized as far as possible; in an ideal state they would no longer exist. In so far as they result from any form of the tyranny of the strong over the weak, they are evidence of virtual robbery, and in the actual state ought not to be countenanced. But, under our present economic system, Ruskin contends, differences of fortune are no index of character:

> In a community regulated only by laws of demand and supply, but protected from open violence, the persons who become rich are, generally speaking, industrious, resolute, proud, covetous, prompt, methodical, sensible, unimaginative, insensitive, and ignorant. The persons who remain poor are the entirely foolish, the entirely wise, the idle, the reckless, the humble, the thoughtful, the dull, the imaginative, the sensitive, the well-informed, the improvident, the irregularly and impulsively wicked, the clumsy knave, the open thief, and the entirely merciful, just and godly person.[1]

Which statement affords food for reflection.

The entire lack of relation between wealth and moral character indicated in this passage may suggest the second of Ruskin's objections to the economic theory of his day. He would broaden the range of economic discussion by giving a more adequate definition of the word "wealth." Rightly considered, wealth is the sum of those things that maintain or enlarge life, intellectual and moral, as well as physical. But most economic discussion not only proceeds upon the assumption of selfish motive, but it leaves out altogether the more worthy objects of effort. Its values are exclusively material, and even of material things it considers only those that can be individually appropriated and exchanged. The real economic value of anything should be estimated by a comparison of its power to maintain life with its cost in life.

[1] *Unto this Last,* Essay IV.

It follows that we cannot safely discuss the laws of increase in material value apart from all other considerations. The statement that a man may gain the whole world and lose his own soul is not a piece of pietism, but a sober economic truth to be reckoned with—for that operation is not one of profit. A wider political economy must ask how best to attain, preserve, and distribute among men all the real goods of life. It will be, therefore, not merely a material but an ethical science; or, rather, it will be, as Ruskin has called it, "a system of conduct and legislation."

This last word suggests Ruskin's third criticism. Current economic theory was, he held, virtually anti-social. It left everything in the power of the individual. It not only allowed all sorts of injustice that spring from superior personal ability, but it encouraged a false spirit of liberty, and weakened the temper of obedience upon which the stability of society largely depends. Ruskin was no democrat. He was in favor of more government rather than less. The function of government, he held, is not limited to the protection of the individual from actual violence. If the State may call upon every man to defend the general wealth, even at the cost of life itself, then it must do all in its power to secure to every man his share in the general wealth. In a word, it is bound to do for the individual everything it possibly can do.

These three objections, variously enforced and illustrated throughout his later writings, are at the bottom of all Ruskin's arraignment of society. And will most men deny that all three are well taken? We may take offense at occasional extravagance in asserting them; we shall certainly dissent from some inferences he drew from them. No one thinks we must travel by stagecoach and sailing vessel again, or relinquish in any wise our command of material energy and product. Probably no one thinks all taking of interest on capital is immoral. These are vagaries of Ruskin's, prompted by an enthusiastic devotion to his principles, but not logically implied in them. Moreover, it may be admitted that the form in which his teaching is put

is now and then over-fanciful. We should hardly look to find economic truths in the behavior of crystals or in the songs of Shakespeare's *Tempest*. A wide-ranging imagination, over-possessed by a fervid purpose, discovers analogies in most unlooked-for places. But the core of Ruskin's doctrine was sound. It was an earnest attempt to apply the morality of the New Testament to all the business of men. Christian men should not object to that. And if Ruskin's denunciation was sometimes severe, was it not needed? Is it not needed even now? What are the dangers that most threaten us in America to-day—the aggregation of wealth in a few hands; the corrupt influence of great moneyed interests upon legislation; the resistless tyranny of trusts and combinations; the degradation of great masses of our lowest laborers in factories and mines; the disrespect for law; the insolence of our youth; the general lack of the spirit of obedience in our civilization—what are all these but precisely the threatening dangers pointed out by Ruskin half a century ago? And, on the other hand, we may thankfully note that in many ways Ruskin's teaching has already begun to bear fruit. The hard pedantry of the Manchester school of economics, supreme then, is now generally discredited. We are finding that government has some other functions than to see that everybody is let alone. State and city have already begun to look after the health, moral and intellectual, as well as physical, of all their citizens; to remove enterprises affecting the common welfare out of the control of private greed; to interfere with the liberty of the individual, in behalf of the general interest, in a score of ways undreamed of when Ruskin wrote. Most of all, a new and broader social sentiment is surely pervading modern thought. It is no longer deemed possible that "an advantageous code of social action may be determined irrespective of the influence of social affections." That once-dreaded word "Socialism," though still used to cover a multitude of follies, is no longer a red rag to frighten all conservative folk. The favorite study of the scholar and the statesman is social science, and social science

is only the attempt to throw a bridge between Christian ethics and political economy. The best thought of the world to-day is being put upon that problem. For all this we are largely to thank John Ruskin. He was no statesman, no philosopher; he was a man of letters. But the man of letters often prepares the way for the philosopher and statesman. Behind every great movement is a great volume of sentiment. In this case it was Ruskin who embodied this social sentiment in literature.

But Ruskin was not content to serve the cause of humanity merely by sitting in a library and writing books. He lived the life of a missionary—teaching, lecturing, exhorting; founding schools, museums, libraries; giving without stint of his money, his time, his treasures of art; writing multitudes of private letters of advice; giving counsel and encouragement to all who sought it; filled with sympathy for all hardship, with indignation for all injustice; burning with zeal to secure for everybody some share in the real goods of life. In the early fifties he was among the first of a little band of social reformers to set on foot a scheme of education for English artisans and establish the Working Men's College, of which F. D. Maurice was president, and with which Charles Kingsley, Tom Hughes, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti were connected. Miss Octavia Hill always found him her most generous helper in her work of intelligent assistance for the honest poor of East London. He was left by his father a fortune of over £160,000,—nearly a million dollars,—but he spent the whole of it in charitable uses. Some of his social experiments seemed quixotic, others trivial; but he knew that, as Burke said, if you want to get anywhere you must start from where you are. If he set some Oxford students at making a road, it was probably because he thought it well those young fellows should find out what manual labor is like rather than because he supposed they would make a very good road. His much-derided Guild of St. George was simply a voluntary association of people willing to help him, whenever opportunity offered, in putting some of his notions into practice. The

only pledge of the Guild is a simple but noble resolve which any Christian man or woman ought to be ready to make. But, however visionary some of Ruskin's plans, we can find inspiration in the example of the man who, at the height of his fame, turned away from his chosen studies and gave up riches and ambition to become a prophet and preacher of righteousness. He did not always prophesy soft things. He was sometimes indignant at us, almost fierce; but never in his own cause. There is not the first trace of a mean personal resentment in his writings or his life. It was much to be without a rival in the magic and mastery of language; it was more to have filled near two score volumes with beauty and wisdom, with never a line of vulgarity, or malice, or irreverence; but perhaps the historian will give him the highest encomium when he writes down John Ruskin as a friend of man.

BROWNING

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

ALLOW me to preface what I have to say with three or four brief quotations. The first shall be a snatch of love song:

All the breath and the bloom of the year in the bag of one bee:
  All the wonder and wealth of the mine in the heart of one gem:
In the core of one pearl all the shade and the shine of the sea:
  Breath and bloom, shade and shine,—wonder, wealth, and—how
    far above them—
  Truth, that's brighter than gem,
  Trust, that's purer than pearl,—
Brightest truth, purest trust in the universe—all were for me
  In the kiss of one girl.

Beautiful that, eh? And what a lilt in its music! Just a trace of Swinburne, perhaps, in its alliterations and assonance, written, you would say, by some *young* fellow with a remarkable ear for metrical effect and a quick eye for beauty of sense. Not much depth doubtless, but the old note, ever new, of young love and bright fancy.

But here is something that strikes a deeper note, of poignant pain, of the love that is stronger than death:

You'll love me yet!—and I can tarry
  Your love's protracted growing:
June reared that bunch of flowers you carry,
  From seeds of April's sowing.

I plant a heartfull now: some seed
  At least is sure to strike,
And yield—what you'll not pluck indeed,
  Not love, but, may be, like.

You'll look at least on love's remains,
A grave's one violet:
Your look?—that pays a thousand pains.
What's death? You'll love me yet!

What a haunting pathos; this surely is the verse of maturer life. Well, the first verses were written when the poet was seventy-eight years old; the second, when he was twenty-eight. But in both alike what directness and simplicity; the man has, you say, deep feeling in youth and fresh feeling in age, but in both his thought is pellucid and clear. Now let me read another bit of what I suppose to be love poetry too:

Room after room,
I hunt the house through
We inhabit together.
Heart, fear nothing, for, heart, thou shalt find her—
Next time, herself!—not the trouble behind her
Left in the curtain, the couch's perfume!
As she brushed it, the cornice-wreath blossomed anew;
Yon looking-glass gleamed at the wave of her feather.

Yet the day wears,
And door succeeds door;
I try the fresh fortune—
Range the wide house from the wing to the centre.
Still the same chance! she goes out as I enter.
Spend my whole day in the quest,—who cares?
But 't is twilight, you see,—with such suites to explore,
Such closets to search, such alcoves to importune!

Something in the line of allegory, apparently; but is it quite so clear to you what it means? The thought would seem to be subtle, and the writer not quite able to handle his analogies so as to do more than suggest vaguely his meaning. The music is gone, too, and even the meter halts a little. But at all events, in all three of the passages is the same delicacy, a certain sensitiveness to finer spiritual moods. The man's art of expression, you will say, may not be quite so clear and facile as we thought at first, but how refined are his sympathies! His execution may sometimes be in-

adequate to his remoter thought, but we shall be sure to find in all his work, however profound and however virile, an inner grace, a spiritual charm. And as we read page after page we find such an interpretation verified. But we turn another leaf, and, suddenly—what is this?—*Mr. Sludge, "the Medium."*

> Now, don't, sir! Don't expose me! Just this once!
> This was the first and only time, I'll swear,—
> Look at me,—see, I kneel,—the only time,
> I swear, I ever cheated,—yes, by the soul
> Of Her who hears—(your sainted mother, sir!)
> All, except this last accident, was truth—
> This little kind of slip!—and even this,
> It was your own wine, sir, the good champagne,
> (I took it for Catawba, you're so kind,)
> Which put the folly in my head!
>
> "Get up?"
> You still inflict on me that terrible face?
> You show no mercy?—Not for Her dear sake,
> The sainted spirit's, whose soft breath even now
> Blows on my cheek—(don't you feel something, sir?)
> You'll tell?
>
> Go tell, then! Who the devil cares
> What such a rowdy chooses to . . .
> Aie—aie—aie!
> Please, sir! your thumbs are through my windpipe, sir!
> Ch—ch!
>
> Well, sir, I hope you've done it now!
> Oh Lord! I little thought, sir, yesterday,
> When your departed mother spoke those words
> Of peace through me, and moved you, sir, so much,
> You gave me—(very kind it was of you)
> These shirt-studs—(better take them back again,
> Please, sir)—yes, little did I think so soon
> A trifle of trick, all through a glass too much
> Of his own champagne, would change my best of friends
> Into an angry gentleman!

And then follow thirty mortal pages filled with keen psychological analysis in which this poor devil of a trickster

turns his vulgarity wrong side out and upside down and holds it in every light for our inspection. One flounders through it and emerges at the end muttering, "Is this poetry, or what is it?" For it is plain that it is something in the way of literature; its very grotesqueness has a kind of force. There's life in it, at all events.

These passages taken almost at random may serve to suggest the great variety of manner and theme in Robert Browning's poetry; though they only suggest it, for it would be quite possible to select three times as many more passages each of an entirely different type from all the rest. I doubt whether any poet of the nineteenth century has so wide a range; and certainly no other recent poet of anything like equal eminence has left so large a body of verse. It is evident, therefore, that it is not easy to hit off an estimate of Browning in a few well-turned sentences, or map his work neatly out in half an hour's talk.

But these quotations may also suggest one reason why there is so much diversity of opinion upon Browning. The truth is there is Browning and Browning: some very clear and some very cloudy, some very graceful and some very grotesque, some very good and some—well let us say, very peculiar. But we are always inclined to rate an author's work in the lump. We take our poets as we take our wives, to love and to cherish for better and for worse. The result is that striking diversities of quality in a really great poet are sure to provoke strenuous attack and strenuous defense. It is hardly in human nature that the reader who falls genuinely in love with Pippa and Colombe and Pompilia and Rabbi Ben Ezra should be equally enamored of Hohenstiel-Schwangau and Jochanan Hakkadosh; yet ten to one, he will feel bound to stand up for his Browning stoutly all through; while on the other hand that unfortunate mortal who, with some foolish notion of beginning at the beginning, has taken his first taste of Browning out of *Pauline* or *Sordello* will doubtless always go on protesting that he can find neither poetry nor meaning in that man.

I realize that it is a somewhat hazardous venture to speak upon any question on which opinions are so sharply divided; especially if one feels obliged, as I must, to take the view of Sir Roger de Coverley, that there's much to be said on both sides. It is certainly absurd to speak of the most of Browning's poetry as unintelligible, or even difficult; most of it is easy enough to all persons who don't insist on taking their poetry merely as a beverage or an anodyne. And I am willing to go a great deal further than that. Browning's best things move me more deeply, seem to me to have more of the genuine quality of inspiration, than any other poetry of this century—save some of Wordsworth's only. But, on the other hand, I cannot deny that some of his verse seems admirably suited to tax the wits of the commentator and to furnish pleasant exercise to the ingenuity of Browning Societies. Either the themes are not intrinsically poetical or they are treated in a subtle, analytic fashion inconsistent with genuine poetical handling. When the twentieth century shall have sifted the work of the nineteenth, I must doubt whether *Sordello,* or *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country,* or *Pacchiarotto,* or the *Parleyings,* or many of *Ferishtah's Fancies* will be found among the poetry that men still read. For this admission, however, we console ourselves by remembering that posterity has been content to forget the earliest and the latest work of many great poets,—Wordsworth, for example. And the amount of Browning's work is so large that you may throw out a good deal and still leave enough to furnish a broad basis for his fame.

But it seems to me there are some deficiencies and limitations characteristic of Mr. Browning's verse at every period of his life. Let me mention some of them. What concessions we must make to the perverse who will none of Browning, we will make at once and have done with it. In the first place, I believe we must admit that much of Browning's work, even in his best period, is lacking in grace. It leaves upon us the impression of robust vigor rather than of beauty. The truth is Browning did not much care to

produce the impression of beauty. "Poesy," says Keats somewhere, "is a drainless shower of light,"

> And they shall be accounted poet kings
> Who simply tell the most heart-easing things.

Now this is precisely what Browning would not have said. The object of poetry, in his thought, was not to soothe, but to rouse; not to minister to our delight, but to enlarge and intensify our life. And if it is said—as it may be with truth—that this is the highest office of poetry, why we have still to insist that it is not the only office; that poetry should have charm as well as might; and that the poet who neglects the sweet persuasive grace of beauty foregoes half his birthright. There is a poetry, and noble poetry, that appeals primarily to the passive side of our natures, that calms and tranquilizes; it is the poetry that is akin to peace. But of that kind of poetry Browning never wrote a line. And more than this there rests upon the truest poetry a certain bloom of beauty. And this Browning's does not have. Not but that his verse has frequent passages of very great beauty. These passages will usually be found where his passion is at its height, and the intensity of his emotion sweeps away all indirections and melts down all the rougher and more untractable elements of his language into clear and glowing utterance. Then he sometimes has the impassioned grace of our old Elizabethan writers—there are such passages not a few in the dramas and in *The Ring and the Book;* not many in his later work. Very often in his lyrical monologues, too, when the joy or the pathos is at its keenest, the language suddenly takes on that thrilling sweetness, the last charm of poetry. Thus, for instance, in *A Toccata of Galuppi's,* where the old Venetian's light music, with its accidental minor strain, suggests all the life and laughter and love that once listened to those notes,—

> till in due time, one by one,
> Some with lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone,
> Death stepped tacitly and took them where they never see the sun.
> . . . . . .

As for Venice and her people, merely born to bloom and drop,
Here on earth they bore their fruitage, mirth and folly were the crop:
What of soul was left, I wonder, when the kissing had to stop?

"Dust and ashes!" So you creak it, and I want the heart to scold.
Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become of all the gold
Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grown old.

Those last lines send a shiver of passionate, sweet regret into the soul. But Browning's lighter verse seldom has this crowning grace. He cannot give to ordinary emotion the charm of phrase, or beautify by speech the common face of life.

Sometimes Browning seems to have a positive preference for the harsh or the grotesque for its own sake. He carries his fear of anything sentimental or effeminate to the opposite extreme, and bandies slang about the most graceful themes. In diction, he had a fancy for the outré, the colloquial, sometimes even for the vulgar. Why should a man end what he calls a poem, on the charm of art, with such a stanza as this?—

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle eats:
Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns his cup:
Nokes outdoes Stokes in azure feats,—
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?

So too in meter he often prefers audacious, jolting rhymes apparently for no better reason than that they are sure to shake the reader up. You remember, for instance, that little poem, *Youth and Art,* in which a man and a woman no longer young look back upon the early days when, rooming on opposite sides of the street, they were very conveniently situated for falling in love, but preferred art instead, and so lost the chance of life. It is a very characteristic poem, with a genuine touch of pathos in it, quite unforgetable,—but you may remember some of its rhymes:

No harm! It was not my fault
  If you never turned your eye's tail up
As I shook upon E *in alt.*,
  Or ran the chromatic scale up:
. . . . . .
Could you say so, and never say,
  "Suppose we join hands and fortunes,
And I fetch her from over the way,
  Her, piano, and long tunes and short tunes"?
. . . . . .
But you meet the Prince at the Board,
  I'm queen myself at *bals-paré*,
I've married a rich old lord,
  And you're dubbed knight and an R. A.

Now here Browning wants to illustrate the truth—a favorite truth with him, and lying, as we shall see, at the bottom of his philosophy of life—that our unsophisticated, spontaneous affections are a safer guide to happiness than prudence or ambition; but he is so fearful his sentiment may get limp or languorous that he dashes in these strokes of absurdity in his rhymes. The humor in these passages too is very characteristic of him. For Browning's humor often consists chiefly in a kind of rough familiarity of manner, a brusque but jovial gaucherie. We Americans would say it has a Western flavor. He is quite unabashed in the face of the greatest names, and slaps the most dignified virtues on the back with a kind of loud intimacy.

Now I take it that in all these cases the undeniable attraction which the grotesque had for Browning is explained by the fact that in the grotesque there is always a certain vigor and strength. It is, so to say, a specific against over-refinement and softness of manner, a proof of that robustness and mass which Browning liked. The truth is, he was so in love with force that he was a little afraid of the soothing effect of grace, of melodious numbers, and rather liked any device that would shock or startle. He had the broad Gothic taste that, under its loveliest arches, high up among the flowing lines, will carve its capitals into quaint and grinning faces. He relished a dash of wild, strong flavor in life. Some of the most vigorous of his

short poems are studies in sheer force, in picturesque or rugged shape. Take, for instance, the *Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister*. One sees how Browning enjoyed that picture of crude, ignorant, and here half-innocent, but intense malignity. The monk is looking out the window at his pet aversion, meek, fair-faced Brother Lawrence, who is watering his flowers in the garden:

Gr-r-r—there go, my heart's abhorrence!
Water your damned flower-pots, do!
If hate killed men, Brother Lawrence,
God's blood, would not mine kill you!
What? your myrtle-bush wants trimming?
Oh, that rose has prior claims—
Needs its leaden vase filled brimming?
Hell dry you up with its flames!

At the meal we sit together:
Salve tibi! I must hear
Wise talk of the kind of weather,
Sort of season, time of year:
Not a plenteous cork-crop: scarcely
Dare we hope oak-galls, I doubt:
What's the Latin name for "parsley"?
What's the Greek name for Swine's Snout?

. . . . . .

Oh, those melons! If he's able
We're to have a feast! so nice!
One goes to the Abbot's table,
All of us get each a slice.
How go on your flowers? None double?
Not one fruit-sort can you spy?
Strange!—And I, too, at such trouble
Keep them close-nipped on the sly!

There's a great text in Galatians,
Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
One sure, if another fails:
If I trip him just a-dying,
Sure of heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
Off to hell, a Manichee?

. . . . . .

Or, there's Satan!—one might venture
Pledge one's soul to him yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
As he'd miss till, past retrieve,
Blasted lay that rose-acacia
We're so proud of! *Hy, Zy, Hine* . . .
'St, there's Vespers! *Plena gratiâ,*
Ave, Virgo! G-r-r—you swine!

Only I think Browning always in danger of overdoing this tendency to crude strength. He forgets that in the very best poetry strength and beauty are married. For his grotesqueness is not infrequently quite gratuitous; he constantly makes upon one the impression of a man not daring to be as graceful as he can. In the *Epilogue* to one of his later volumes—the *Pacchiarotto*—he expressly disclaims the wish to charm by beauty of manner, and avers that strength and sweetness cannot go together:

'Tis said I brew stiff drink,
But the deuce a flavor of grape is there.
Hardly a May-go-down, 't is just
A sort of gruff Go-down-it-must—
No Merry-go-down, no gracious gust
Commingles the racy with Springtide's rare!
"What wonder," say you, "that we cough, and blink,
At Autumn's heady drink?"

Is it a fancy, friends?
Mighty and mellow are never mixed,
Though mighty and mellow be born at once.
Sweet for the future,—strong for the nonce!
. . . . . .
Man's thoughts and loves and hates!
Earth is my vineyard, these grew there:
. . . . . .
Earth's yield! Who yearn for the Dark Blue Sea's,
Let them "lay, pray, bray"—the addle-pates!
Mine be Man's thoughts, loves, hates!

But I believe there is a heresy in these lines that has done much to limit the value of their author's work. Despite his assertion it still is true that mighty and mellow are mixed in the wine the greatest poets pour us; and I fear that to

some of Mr. Browning's vintage no ripening years will ever give the true ambrosial flavor.

And then I should say, more broadly, that Browning was always deficient in the sense of phrase, had not in any very high degree the gift of poetic expression. We all read Browning,—I suppose,—many of us admire him, most of us wonder at him; but who quotes him? The fact is that, for the most part, Browning is not a quotable poet. Even in his best poems, those that most arouse and inspire, I do not often find that subtle felicity of phrase which slips into the memory and stays there. His word is not the spontaneous, inevitable one. His line doesn't have that indefinable magical power which marks the most perfect work. Mr. Matthew Arnold, you remember, used to fix upon this power of phrase and single lines, as the surest touchstone of really great poetry. It is a mark, an accent of distinction, he used to say, which we recognize but cannot explain. Now that this quality is entirely a matter of expression, one would hardly affirm; but surely it is largely so. For we often find it when the underlying thought is neither new nor commanding. Could anything be simpler, for instance, than the thought and sentiment of Wordsworth's lines to his Highland reaper who sings among the sheaves?

> Will no one tell me what she sings?
> Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
> For old, unhappy, far off things,
> And battles long ago.

And yet the accent is here. And, on the other hand, it is often wanting in poetry of vivid imagination and intense emotion. Browning's poetry will afford us proof enough of that. Take his *Andrea del Sarto,* for example, one of the greatest short poems of this century, conceived with keenest dramatic sympathy, suffused with the deepest pathos, the pathos of failure. I seem to see that man Andrea always, see the very heart of him; nay, I see even that still, gray twilight on the slope of Fiesoli when he told

his story, hear in the hush of it the clear note of the convent bell, and the low whistle of the lurking lover; but I can hardly recall a single line of what Andrea says. Browning often seems to me to be striving hard for adequate expression, but not quite attaining it. It is as if his thought were too swift for his word. He is an eager, tongue-tied poet. Had his gift of utterance and his artistic sense of form been commensurate with his other powers, I am inclined to say that Robert Browning would have been the greatest English poet in the last two centuries.

Of late years it hasn't been quite the correct thing to call Browning obscure. It used to be. Even the youngest of us is old enough to remember when Browningese was spoken of as "a Babylonish dialect"; when a select school offered instruction in French, German, and—Browning; when Douglas Jerrold,—was it he?—once in convalescence, thanked God he'd not gone mad, after his wife, to whom he had handed the book, confessed that she, too, could make nothing of the *Sordello:* and a multitude of other such stories, now grown somewhat musty. For we have changed all that; and nowadays not to understand Browning is by no means a proof of sanity,—rather the contrary. To be sure, his admirers admit that his style has striking peculiarities; that, however, they claim is a merit. It is highly individual, they say; it is Browning's own. No one else writes anything like it,—which is probably true; though whether it be a merit or not, there may be difference of opinion. I should think it would have to be admitted that there are certain peculiarities of Browning's manner that do not always tend to clearness. For instance, as all his readers know, Browning is especially prone to audacities of ellipsis and arrangement. He is impatient of those humbler parts of speech that only serve the grammar; and he goes through his verses with merciless spud to root out all the prepositions and conjunctions and relative pronouns. His ventures in arrangement are sometimes still more confusing. Mr. Hutton singles out these two lines from the *Sordello,*

To be by him themselves made act,
Not watch Sordello acting each of them.

"What they mean," says Mr. Hutton, "I have not the most distant notion. Mr. Browning might as well have written 'To be by him, her, himself, herself, themselves, made act, etc.' for any vestige of meaning I can attach to this curious mob of pronouns and verbs." If this seems rather severely obtuse of Mr. Hutton, why we must remember that it was written nearly a half century ago, before the Browning sense had been so generally developed. But the lines *are* a good example of the liberties Browning allows himself in throwing words together. Proper accentuation makes them intelligible, I suppose:

To be by him *themselves* made act,
Not watch *Sordello* acting each of them;

that is, To be themselves made to act by Sordello, and not each of them to watch his acting. It is commonly taken to be a rule of good composition, whether in prose or verse, that the structure shall be so clear that none of the reader's mental energy need be consumed in deciding what the order of thought is. But it is evident that Mr. Browning never did consent to be under bondage to any hard laws of the rhetoric or grammar. When these liberties result in some undoubted poetic gain, some increased swiftness or intensity, why it would be finical to object to them; nay, in such cases, the quickened perception of the reader will usually find no difficulty in them. But I think they sometimes occur when there is no such excuse. Good composition either in prose or poetry is vastly difficult work; Browning seemed always somewhat impatient of it, and a little too much inclined to insist on a division of the labor between himself and his reader.

Then again, the poetic form Browning preferred usually makes at least a second reading necessary. For two thirds of all Browning's poetry, nine tenths of all his best poetry, is in the form of the dramatic monologue. Now the dra-

matic monologue is what the Irishman called pretty accurately "a dialogue between one person." And if there's a bull in the definition, why there's a bull in the thing. The dramatic monologue is not a soliloquy, but really a bit of drama; there is only one speaker, but at least one other person is supposed to be present, interjecting questions, replying, approving or disapproving, and continually changing the inflection of the speaker's statement. Moreover, there is usually no means of knowing, to begin with, who is the speaker, what are his circumstances, or what the theme of his speaking. It is, as I said, a bit of drama, but a bit of drama without any list of *dramatis personæ,* with no indication of scene or character, and with all the parts cancelled but one. In fact, if you sit in a perfectly dark room and hear an entire stranger talk into the hither end of a telephone, you will have a very neat idea of the plan of the dramatic monologue. I don't mean to imply that this monologue is not often a most effective artistic form; it is, and often very beautiful too. Nothing could be better suited to that intense and concentrated expression of personality in which Browning excels; but none the less, it is a somewhat difficult form for the reader. In the first place it is usually necessary to read the whole poem through once in order to get at the persons and the situation; we must, so to speak, walk quite round the house on the outside before we can find the door to let us in. And then the condensed and highly suggestive nature of the composition calls for the closest and most sympathetic attention from the reader throughout.

But Browning's worst obscurity does not arise from any such mannerisms in form and structure. With his mannerisms we can become familiar; but no amount of familiarity will ever make easy such a passage as this. It is from one of the most interesting of his later books, *Ferishtah's Fancies,* and the subject of it is the possibility of taking an optimistic view of this present evil world:

"Take one and try conclusions—this, suppose!
God is all-good, all-wise, all-powerful: truth?
Take it and rest there. What is man? Not God:

None of these absolutes therefore,—yet himself,
A creature with a creature's qualities.
Make them agree, these two conceptions! Each
Abolishes the other. Is man weak,
Foolish and bad? He must be Ahriman,
Co-equal with an Ormuzd, Bad with Good,
Or else a thing made at the Prime Sole Will,
Doing a maker's pleasure—with results
Which—call, the wide world over, 'what must be'—
But, from man's point of view, and only point
Possible to his powers, call—evidence
Of goodness, wisdom, strength? we mock ourselves
In all that's best of us,—man's blind but sure
Craving for these in very deed not word,
Reality and not illusions. Well,—
Since these nowhere exist—nor there where cause
Must have effect, nor here where craving means
Craving unfollowed by fit consequence
And full supply, aye sought for, never found—
These—what are they but man's own rule of right?
A scheme of goodness recognized by man,
Although by man unrealizable,—
Not God's with whom to will were to perform:
Nowise performed here, therefore never willed.
What follows but that God, who could the best,
Has willed the worst,—while man, with power to match
Will with performance, were deservedly
Hailed the supreme—provided . . . here's the touch
That breaks the bubble . . . this concept of man's
Were man's own work, his birth of heart and brain,
His native grace, no alien gift at all.
The bubble breaks here. Will of man create?
No more than this my hand which strewed the beans
Produced them also from its finger-tips.
Back goes creation to its source, source prime
And ultimate, the single and the sole."

I should think the most ardent devotee of Browning must admit this to be obscure. He would doubtless say, however, that its obscurity is due to the abstruseness and subtlety of the thought. We cannot expect, he would urge, easy and simple expression upon such a theme, any more than we expect it in Butler's *Analogy* or the philosophy of the Unconscious; even angelic intelligences on such themes—as

Milton may remind us—"find no end, in wandering mazes lost." Well, I should say that if any subject does present such inherent difficulties as to make clear statement impossible, why then it is not a fit subject for poetry. But the truth is that the obscurity in such passages as this, is largely in the expression. The thought is not methodically arranged or clearly drawn out. The poet is impatient to be at the goal of his argument; he starts a thought and leaves it half uttered to hasten after another; he cuts his sentence into disjointed fragments; he hopelessly deranges his grammar; almost the only mark of punctuation in the passage is that last resort of puzzled syntax, the dash, of which there are thirteen in the lines I read. The result is that the passage looks like a page of Butler's *Analogy,* but a page of Butler's *Analogy* struck by lightning. Something of this kind of obscurity you can find in every volume Browning wrote; in *Pauline,* and *Sordello,* and *Ferishtah,* and *La Saisiaz,* and *Parleyings* you can find a great deal of it.

Another and even more vexatious kind of obscurity occurs, now and then, in the work even of Mr. Browning's best period. I mean that obscurity which results from the attempt to convey definite meaning by remote, or fanciful, or confused analogies. For instance here is the last stanza of a little poem—I suppose the situation suggested by the two preceding stanzas is that of a lover who tires of his lady, of the constant bloom of June; but I don't think the meaning is made much clearer by the context:

> And after, for pastime,
> If June be refulgent
> With flowers in completeness,
> All petals, no prickles,
> Delicious as trickles
> Of wine poured at mass-time,—
> And choose One indulgent
> To redness and sweetness:
> Or if, with experience of man and of spider,
> June use my June-lightning, the strong insect-ridder,
> And stop the fresh film-work,—why, June will consider.

It is only a dim conjecture I get from this; but I am sure Mr. Browning meant me to get something more than that. There is, you know, a kind of lyric poetry which does not ask any definite meaning, but like music only vaguely suggests a sentiment or emotion; Shelley wrote indescribably beautiful verse of that sort; but Browning doesn't. The intellectual element in him is too strong for that, and in all his lyrics you feel sure there is definite meaning, if only you could get at it.

I think the cause of such obscurity as that of the two passages I have just read is to be found in that peculiar constitution of Browning's genius from which proceeds most that is characteristic, good as well as bad, in all his work. His obscurity is an almost inevitable accompaniment of that combination of qualities upon which his power depends. For, if we seek to analyze Browning's genius, we shall find, I think, at the root of it, as its essential, distinguishing characteristic, the union of two qualities not often combined in one man,—the intense, eager temper, and the curious, subtle, speculative temper. To find either of these alone is common enough; to find them together is extremely uncommon. The temperament of the lover or the hero united with the temperament of the casuist or the diplomat,—that is Browning. When the two sides of his nature work together with balance and harmony, then indeed we have poetry that for combined passion and wisdom is unmatched in the nineteenth century. But what I am just now insisting on is that the work of such a writer must often be obscure. His curious, subtilizing intellect is attracted, not by the broad and open truths of life, common to all men and easily understood, but rather by the mysterious truths that lie in the depths of our souls, by those questions of conduct that are perplexed and difficult, by those types of character that are unusual or enigmatic. Browning always had this predilection for intricate psychology, or for puzzling questions of casuistry. Nothing pleased him better than to expose the plausible reasonings with which men deceive others and half deceive

themselves. *Bishop Blougram's Apology,* for instance, and *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau* are good examples of the zest with which he tracked a speaker through a long course of special pleading to a conclusion recognized as only half true at last. To handle themes like these with clearness demands not only consummate skill but tireless patience. You must have either the slow analytic habit of mind which is content to syllogize and demonstrate, or else the brooding, reflective habit which gradually transmutes thought into image and sentiment, as Tennyson does, for instance, in the *In Memoriam.* But neither habit is possible to Browning's eager, passionate temper. His mental action is always swift and nervous. His perception darts like quicksilver through all the windings of an intricate mental process. His mind is always a-wrestle. It never lies quiet to mirror the shapes of passing thought, as Tennyson's always does. Still less can he endure the reasoning process. He cannot delay for the deliberate steps of logic. You will find all Browning's deepest beliefs rest at last not on reasoning but on the swifter assurance of intuition. If a man thus attempts, as Browning habitually does, to write upon the most abstruse themes of the philosopher with the fine frenzy of the lover, when he succeeds, he will be sure to write wise and noble poetry; but when he does not succeed, he will be sure to write very obscure poetry. Browning certainly illustrates both statements. That he failed in his early attempts is not strange; it would have been incredible had he succeeded. In *Pauline* and *Sordello* he was trying to explore the most hidden recesses of the human heart at an age when Tennyson was practising his onomatopœia with Airy Fairy Lilians and Marianas in the Moated Grange. In his later verse, too, I think it must be admitted that the metaphysics are often too much for the poetry. As I have intimated, at my time of life I don't propose to go through the difficulties of forming a taste for *Fifine, Ferishtah,* and the rest. But there is that long, glorious period of thirty years, between *Sordello* and *Fifine,* in which his work, with slight exception, is clear, well-balanced, inspiring; on the whole

I think a nobler body of verse than any other English poet wrote between 1840 and 1870.

For I have played the *advocatus diaboli* long enough. I too claim to be a lover of Browning, if not a devotee. Let us come to his praises.

I may summarize all I have to say in praise of Browning—and higher praise I hardly know how to give—in the statement that he is preëminently, and in all senses, the poet of *life*. He had what has been called "the splendid capacity for being alive" himself. No other English poet since Shakespeare leaves upon us the impression of such intense vitality as Robert Browning. He evidently made that impression upon all those who knew him personally,—a large, robust, healthy personality, pulsing full of life in body, brain, and heart. There was nothing narrow and nothing languid about the man. He seemed to put the whole of himself into his every act. And this personal force was so eager and expansive that the man couldn't be conventionalized, or narrowed into exclusive sympathy with any class or order. He was, in the best sense, the most democratic of English poets. Think of trying to say Lord Browning! You know he is the only English poet of eminence in the last two centuries who lived to be over sixty years old without settling back into the ranks of the political conservatives. You remember his sonnet, *Why I am a Liberal,* written when he was seventy-three years old:

"Why?" Because all I haply can and do,
All that I am now, all I hope to be,—
Whence comes it save from fortune setting free
Body and soul the purpose to pursue,
God traced for both? If fetters, not a few,
Of prejudice, convention, fall from me,
These shall I bid men—each in his degree
Also God-guided—bear, and gayly, too?

But little do or can the best of us:
That little is achieved through Liberty.
Who, then, dares hold, emancipated thus,
His fellow shall continue bound? Not I,
Who live, love, labor freely, nor discuss
A brother's right to freedom. That is "Why."

And his vitality never waned. His optimism was invincible. He never reached the term when he was ready to say,

> It is time to be old,
> To take in sail.

His later work may be obscure, but not because he was aging; rather, as I said, it is because his powers are too eager and swift; he is surging too full of life for the measured and ordered utterance his theme demands. Browning is the only English poet I remember who lived to see more than fifty years and didn't grow old a day. Age couldn't wither him. And this personal force of the man goes into all his work, making it vital, stimulating. You can't read Browning while you are standing on one leg or slipping into an after dinner doze.

Now with this intense interest in life himself, it was inevitable that Browning in his poetry should be concerned almost entirely, not with abstractions, but with persons. The title of one of his best volumes might be fitly applied to all his works, *Men and Women*. He never really cared for anything else. He had a remarkable gift of description; but he seldom cared to use it. Almost never will you find in his verse those long and brilliant passages of pure description which so often brighten the pages of Tennyson. The landscape was of interest to Browning only as a setting for his action, and his best pictures of it are momentary vivid glimpses seen through the passion-illumined eyes of some of his men and women. Take this of the Roman Campagna, as it is seen—nay, as the very soul of it is felt—by the yearning lovers set solitary in the midst of it,—

> The champaign with its endless fleece
> Of feathery grasses everywhere!
> Silence and passion, joy and peace,
> An everlasting wash of air—
> Rome's ghost since her decease.

Readers of Browning will remember how many of his best poems have some vivid setting in the external world—the gray twilight of *Andrea del Sarto;* the morning of David's

divine vision in *Saul;* those pauses in the flight of Pompilia and Caponsacchi—

> We stepped into a hovel to get food;
> . . . . . .
> All outside is lone field, moon and such peace.

What a lovely line that! And the passionate, thunder-laden hour of Sebald and Ottima in the *Pippa Passes,* when

> Swift ran the searching tempest overhead;
> And ever and anon some bright white shaft
> Burned through the pine-tree roof, here burned and there,
> As if God's messenger through the close wood screen
> Plunged and replunged his weapon at a venture,
> Feeling for guilty thee and me: then broke
> The thunder like a whole sea overhead—

Half a hundred such passages will occur to any lover of Browning as examples of what I mean. You cannot forget them. But they are hardly description; rather our intense sympathy with the persons flashes all their surroundings suddenly into our memory forever.

So, too, Browning even in his most abstruse passages seldom discusses general truths in the abstract. It is rather the truth as incarnated in persons, taken up into the individual life that he cares for. For, after all, men and women are the most interesting things in this world. And what a company of them in Browning's book! Speak of Browning's men and what a throng come crowding into memory,—Andrea, and Valence, and Mertoun, and Fra Lippo, and Hervé Riel, and Waring, and Ogniben, and Rabbi Ben Ezra, and Abt Vogler, and the Pope, and Guido, and Caponsacchi, and Saul, and David, and John the Apostle —and scores of others, each a separate, living human soul. And the women—that company is more wonderful still: little Pippa, hopeful health and innocence personified; the wife in *By the Fireside,* who, I suppose, is Elizabeth Barrett herself; the two Duchesses; Constance; poor Mildred of *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon,* that "lady like a dew drop," crushed by a fate more pitiful, more unutterably pathetic than anything I remember in modern poetry; noble Colombe,

with whom—to say truth—of all the company I am most in love myself; and that wonderful Pompilia, Roman waif that by God's good grace, even under the smitings of devilish malignity, grows into the stature of perfect womanhood, learns the ransoming power of a true affection and the mysterious benedictions of motherhood, and dies a blessed martyr, a thing enskied and sainted,—but time would fail me to do more than begin that long list of Browning's women. Surely no other English poet save Shakespeare only can match them. And what women they are! Women throughout, not men; and yet strong as well as sweet, firm of will, broad of intellect, rich in all varied graces and charm. If I were a woman, I would give Robert Browning, the most robust and virile of modern poets, the high praise of having shown better than any one else, what woman may be and do.

And think what a range of experiences, experiences too of the most profound questions of human life, is represented by these men and women of Browning's creation. In breadth of dramatic sympathy Browning, I should say, is the most remarkable English poet for two hundred and fifty years; some of our novelists may perhaps equal him, but no poet can. He isn't, indeed, in the fullest sense of the word a dramatist. He hasn't the skill and patience necessary for dramatic construction. He is in haste to get at the heart of his action, and his dramas usually, therefore, are all catastrophe. And then Browning hasn't the serene artistic impartiality of the perfect dramatist. He never can hide himself behind his characters, sink his own personality in theirs, as Shakespeare does. Browning himself is always in his world, and we are never at a loss to perceive his own energetic agreement or dissent in whatever his characters utter. His interest in all sorts and conditions of men is not the pure joy of the dramatist in watching the varied procession of human life pass by, but rather the interest of the speculative philosopher and moralist who would see what every form of human action and passion, even of sin and folly, can say for itself. Even in his best period he had rather too much liking for intricate psychol-

ogy. That is why he prefers the monologue, and why even in his dramas the interest all centers in the leading figure. He couldn't, like Shakespeare, write a play in the broad manner of real life, in which dull folks and poor commonplace devils have a chance as well as their betters.

For, however wide the range of Browning's characters, you will find that they are all alike in that they all have a certain fire and intensity,—a richness of passion or of intellect,—usually of both. In Browning's men and women the tide of life is always at the full. The paler joys, the lesser sorrows, the commonplace out of which our tame daily life is made, are no stuff for his verse. In this world full of strange problems and great passions he has no mind to sing the hopes and fears of pretty girls or nice young men whose fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love, to watch the miller's daughter bend above the dimpled stream, or Lady Flora take her broidery frame and add a crimson to the quaint macaw. There's a charm in all that doubtless; but not for a nature eager, like Browning's, to plumb the depths of human life.

All striving and aggressive phases of personality, on the other hand, have a fascination for Browning. He loves power, and power in exercise. He has a quick sense ever of the zest of our animal life of body and senses when it is full and healthy. Where is there a better expression of the joy of life than in those bounding lines the shepherd boy, David, sings to the despondent Saul?

"Oh, our manhood's prime vigor! No spirit feels waste,
Not a muscle is stopped in its playing nor sinew unbraced.
Oh, the wild joys of living! the leaping from rock up to rock,
The strong rending of boughs from the fir-tree, the cool silver shock
Of the plunge in a pool's living water, the hunt of the bear,
And the sultriness showing the lion is couched in his lair.
And the meal, the rich dates yellowed over with gold dust divine,
And the locust-flesh steeped in the pitcher, the full draught of wine,
And the sleep in the dried river-channel where bulrushes tell
That the water was wont to go warbling so softly and well.
How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ
All the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy!"

In some of Browning's most admirable studies of character we see this vigorous physical life bursting out in revolt and waywardness from under the unnatural restraints and conventions imposed upon it. There is Fra Lippo, for example,—a ruddy, full-blooded nature, sensuous but not gross, and with the artist's quick full feeling of the beauty and life of the world. And by sad misfortune, when he was eight years old, they had clapped him into a monastery. All the man, the painter, the poet in him they tried to cool and narrow into the mere monk,—and of course they couldn't. One bright night, you remember, he has been out on a frolic not quite becoming the cowl and tonsure and is just slipping quietly back to get a little sleep before he begins painting in the morning again on St. Jerome,

> . . . knocking at his poor old breast
> With his great round stone to subdue the flesh,

when he is suddenly snapped up by the police. With ready assurance, however, he makes friends with his captors, and in confidence tells them the story of his life,—how, in some way almost unknown to himself, he had when a mere boy begun to daub pictures on the wall of the cloister, monks first, then folks at church, men and lastly women—the Prior's niece—too, just as God made them, till one day the Prior looked in and stopped all that in no time:

> I painted all, then cried, "'T is ask and have;
> Choose, for more's ready!"—laid the ladder flat,
> And showed my covered bit of cloister-wall.
> The monks closed in a circle and praised loud
> Till checked, taught what to see and not to see,
> Being simple bodies,—"That's the very man!
> Look at the boy who stoops to pat the dog!
> That woman 's like the Prior's niece who comes
> To care about his asthma: it's the life!"
> But there my triumph's straw-fire flared and funked;
> Their betters took their turn to see and say:
> The Prior and the learned pulled a face
> And stopped all that in no time. "How? what's here?
> Quite from the mark of painting, bless us all!
> Faces, arms, legs, and bodies like the true

As much as pea and pea! it's devil's game!
Your business is not to catch men with show,
With homage to the perishable clay,
But lift them over it, ignore it all,
Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.
Your business is to paint the souls of men—
Man's soul, and it's a fire, smoke . . . no, it's not . . .
It's vapor done up like a new-born babe—
(In that shape when you die it leaves your mouth)
It's . . . well, what matters talking, it's the soul!
Give us no more of body than shows soul!
. . . . . .
Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!
Rub all out, try at it a second time."
. . . . . .
. . . Now, is this sense, I ask?
A fine way to paint soul, by painting body
So ill, the eye can't stop there, must go further
And can't fare worse! . . .
. . . Take the prettiest face,
The Prior's niece . . . patron-saint—is it so pretty
You can't discover if it means hope, fear,
Sorrow or joy? won't beauty go with these?
Suppose I've made her eyes all right and blue,
Can't I take breath and try to add life's flash,
And then add soul and heighten them threefold?
Or say there's beauty with no soul at all—
(I never saw it—put the case the same—)
If you get simple beauty and nought else,
You get about the best thing God invents:
That's somewhat: and you'll find the soul you have missed,
Within yourself, when you return him thanks.
"Rub all out!" Well, well, there's my life, in short,
And so the thing has gone on ever since.
I'm grown a man no doubt, I've broken bounds:
You should not take a fellow eight years old
And make him swear to never kiss the girls.
I'm my own master, paint now as I please—
. . . . . .
And yet the old schooling sticks, the old grave eyes
Are peeping o'er my shoulder as I work,
The heads shake still—"It's art's decline, my son!
You're not of the true painters, great and old;
Brother Angelico's the man, you'll find;
Brother Lorenzo stands his single peer:
Fag on at flesh, you'll never make the third!"

Flower o' the pine,
You keep your mistr . . . manners, and I'll stick to mine!
I'm not the third, then: bless us, they must know!
Don't you think they're the likeliest to know,
They with their Latin? So, I swallow my rage,
Clench my teeth, suck my lips in tight, and paint
To please them—sometimes do, and sometimes don't;
For, doing most, there's pretty sure to come
A turn, some warm eve finds me at my saints—
A laugh, a cry, the business of the world—
(*Flower o' the peach,*
Death for us all, and his own life for each!)
And my whole soul revolves, the cup runs over,
The world and life's too big to pass for a dream,
And I do these wild things in sheer despite,
And play the fooleries you catch me at,
In pure rage! The old mill-horse, out at grass
After hard years, throws up his stiff heels so,
Although the miller does not preach to him
The only good of grass is to make chaff.

Now in these lines you have not only a very live man indeed, but you have the whole protest of the Renaissance against the Middle Ages, done in little.

Cries Fra Lippo, as he thinks of what is possible to art,—

Oh, oh,
It makes me mad to see what men shall do
And we in our graves! This world's no blot for us,
Nor blank; it means intensely, and means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.

These last lines might be taken as a motto for all Browning's work:

'This world—it means intensely and it means good:
To find its meaning is my meat and drink.'

For the ends of life, in Browning's thought, are to be reached not principally by self-control, by wise restraint and temperate acquiescence, but rather by unsated curiosity, unending desire and aspiration.

So, too, it sometimes seems that Browning is in love with

vigor of any sort, good or bad. And he does have a certain sympathy with all action; even the superficial bustle of life, the noise and dust of it, I think, had a certain attraction for him. They were better than stillness and apathy. He could understand those people who like the blaze and blare and are emulous of the drum major's place in the human procession. "Oh dear," sighs his Italian noble, penned up in a lonely villa on the slopes of the mountain,—

Had I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square;
Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window there!
. . . . . .
Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with cowls and sandals,
And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the yellow candles;
One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with handles,
And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better prevention of scandals:
Bang-whang-whang goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.
Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in life!

So Browning has a few of the most stirring lyrics of action written in this century,—poems of daring or adventure, like *Hervé Riel,* or *How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix,* or *Pheidippides.* He had the genuine English love of brawn and grit. He loved to see all a man's powers put on a stretch, loved to see how the whole nature rises to the strain of a great emergency. This liking was strong in him to the end, and some of his most rousing lyrics are sandwiched between the casuistry of his latest volumes. But, after all, it wasn't merely the action that Browning cared for. You will find that for the most part, the charm of his narrative poetry does not reside, as that of Scott does, in the mere picture of vigorous, healthy, external life, the joy of doing brave things in the fresh air, but rather in the inner force of character which the action reveals. The secret of his love of action lay in his conviction that in action only can the soul get scope and strength. Not in any asceticisms, not in retirement and reflection, but in the throng

and press of men, in wrestle with all life's problems and life's evils do we prove what we are made of, and find what we are made for.

Here is Browning's greatest power,—in the realm of emotion and passion. Lovers of Browning can claim without fear of denial that no other poet of the last generation has so often shown us the soul rapt into passionate ardors, aglow with noble emotion. With noble emotion, I say; for the passion of Browning's verse is not fleshly but spiritual; nor is it violent, for violence is always a proof of weakness, but strong, deep, and sane. And, furthermore, you will find Browning does not often merely exhibit passion or emotion for its own sake as a kind of spectacle,—as our modern realists do. He wasn't of that school of writers who, thinking with Jaques that all the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players, deem it the province of literature to make of the pains and joys of human life a thrilling show. In Browning's work there is always a certain ethical suggestiveness. Even where the passion of his men and women is most intense, it still turns our thought upon the truths of character and conduct. On reflection we find that his best poems are a study of the relation of emotion to the ends of life. At the bottom of his lyrics we find, not as in most poetry a sentiment, but a truth. In fact emotion, I think, is always most interesting to Browning when it sets at work questioning or speculation, and heats the intellect into unwonted subtlety and power. There is no more wonderful picture of passionate desperation in Browning than that of the villain, Guido, in *The Ring and the Book;* it is a revelation of swiftness and agility of intellectual movement, of a venomous keenness of suggestion, of devilish subtlety, such as almost takes your breath away: yet you can't tell which to wonder at most, the power of intellect or the force of concentrated passion that seethes beneath the intellect. In Browning's later work, as we know, the intellectual interest got the upper hand; in his zeal to interpret life, he lost the power to portray it. Yet even in the most super-subtilized work of his later period, like *Fifine at*

the Fair, the labyrinth of casuistry rests on a basis of feeling. But in the work of his best time, when intellect and emotion are in healthy balance, we find superb examples of the charm of a rich and healthy emotion. For Browning had no distrust of the passions. He wasn't afraid of them. He didn't believe, as some good folks seem to, that our passions are given us merely to test our ability to sit down on them and keep them under. The emotions, as their name implies, are the motive power of life, and no large, efficient life is possible without a full and strong emotional nature. Indeed, deep and absorbing emotion, if it be healthy, is itself one of the ends of life. Better an hour of entire surrender to a noble joy than years of sluggish bondage to convention and commonplace. Browning has a whole group of poems that illustrate this. Take for instance *The Last Ride Together.* What fate must sever this lover from his lady in the future we know not, nor need to know; for this hour at least she is his, and that is enough:

I said—Then, dearest, since 't is so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
  Since this was written and needs must be—
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness!
Take back the hope you gave,—I claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame,
  Your leave for one more last ride with me.

. . . . . .

Hush, if you saw some western cloud
All billowy-bosomed, over-bowed
By many benedictions—sun's
And moon's, and evening-star's at once—
  And so, you, looking and loving best,
Conscious grew, your passion drew
Cloud, sunset, moonrise, star-shine too,
Down on you, near and yet more near,
Till flesh must fade for heaven was here!—
Thus leant she and lingered—joy and fear!
  Thus lay she a moment on my breast.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
  What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated, who can tell!
Where had I been now if the worst befell?
  And here we are riding, she and I.

Fail I alone, in words and deeds?
Why, all men strive, and who succeeds?
We rode; it seemed my spirit flew,
Saw other regions, cities new,
  As the world rushed by on either side.
I thought,—All labor, yet no less
Bear up beneath their unsuccess.
Look at the end of work, contrast
The petty done, the undone vast,
This present of theirs with the hopeful past!
  I hoped she would love me; here we ride.

. . . . . .

What does it all mean, poet? Well,
Your brains beat into rhythm, you tell
What we felt only; you expressed
You hold things beautiful the best,
  And place them in rhyme so, side by side.
'T is something, nay 't is much: but then,
Have you yourself what's best for men?
Are you—poor, sick, old ere your time—
Nearer one whit your own sublime
Than we who never have turned a rhyme?
  Sing, riding's a joy! For me, I ride.

In these sweeping lines there is little thought of anything besides the joy of entire abandonment to an emotion which seems for the hour worth all the world. But Browning is constantly reminding us that in such hours of supreme emotion there is often a distinctively moral value. It is when we get the uplift of some such spiritual elevation that we see the truth most clearly; above all, it is in some such heat of soul that we gain the intensity of conviction needed for

an earnest, strenuous life. For, in Browning's philosophy of life, failure comes oftenest from inertia, from selfish prudence, from a lack of impassioned devotion to ideal ends. We accommodate ourselves; we shrink before life's obstacles; we grow feeble and lukewarm; and then we lose the zest of life, and—what is worse—fail to realize its best possibilities. But there are glorious moments when we are caught up out of the ways of use and wont and see life in the light of some noble passion. It is then that the soul learns its reach, finds what it is to be alive, and gets a sense of infinite possibilities. These luminous points lighten all the lower ranges of our life.

> Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!
> But not quite so sunk that moments,
> Sure though seldom, are denied us,
> When the spirit's true endowments
> Stand out plainly from its false ones,
> And apprise it if pursuing
> Or the right way or the wrong way,
> To its triumph or undoing.

Again and again in the lives of Browning's men and women do we find these impassioned moments, when emotion becomes revelation and inspiration,—flashes supreme truth upon the conviction, or energizes the resolve for a lifetime. I can remind you of but one instance—that of Caponsacchi, the priest of *The Ring and the Book*. I must not read at length from his monologue, but most of you will remember it,—once read it is an unforgetable thing. You remember how this idle and gilded priest toying with the pretty sins of life suddenly sees one evening the face of Pompilia,—

> A lady, young, tall, beautiful, strange and sad.
> It was as when, in our cathedral once,
> As I got yawningly through matin-song,
> I saw *facchini* bear a burden up,
> Base it on the high-altar, break away
> A board or two, and leave the thing inside
> Lofty and lone: and lo, when next I looked,
> There was the Rafael!

In the revelation of that glance, his past life seems a vain and wicked thing.

> What if I turned Christian? It might be!

And you remember how twice again there come exalted moments when he brushes away the tangle of deceits his enemies have woven about Pompilia and himself, looks straight through all his doubts about mere priestly properties, and sees his duty as a man and servant of God. They were the moments that made his life.

I know it is sometimes said that Browning glorifies impulse too much. They tell us he can pardon anything to force. Perhaps the needful but less inspiring virtues of prudence and self-command hardly get their rights in his verse; but I do not think that Browning in his love of power ever forgets virtue. What is true, however, is that he admires an active sinner more than a passive one. The hopeless character, in his view, is that which hasn't personal force enough to make either vice or virtue out of. That is the lesson of that poem the moralists are most troubled by, *The Statue and the Bust.* It is the story of a lady who sat at her window in Florence and watched the Duke ride by in the square below. The lady was the bride of one of the hard and cruel Riccardi; the Duke, he for aught I know was married too. But even in the first glance each formed the resolve to burst all bonds of convention, nay of virtue, for each other's sake. Said the lady to herself,—

> "If I spend the night with that devil twice,
> May his window serve as my loop of hell
> Whence a damned soul looks on paradise!"

Said the Duke to himself,—

> "Dear or cheap
> As the cost of this cup of bliss may prove
> To body or soul, I will drain it deep."

But to-day some petty business hinders, and to-morrow, and to-morrow; and the years go past until the lady wakes to find her beauty fled, and calls Della Robbia to carve her bust in

the window where she used to look, and the Duke finds his passion faded to a memory, and calls John of Douay to set his statue in the square where he used to ride,—memorials both, statue and bust, of a purpose, resolved again and again, never repented, yet never fulfilled.

And now soliloquizes Browning:

> Let a man contend to the uttermost
> For his life's set prize, be it what it will!
>
> The counter our lovers staked was lost
> As surely as if it were lawful coin:
> And the sin I impute to each frustrate ghost
>
> Is—the unlit lamp and the ungirt loin,
> Though the end in sight was a vice, I say.

Browning is putting the extreme case, and as is usual when people do that, I think, rather overdoes it. Yet we have the best of authority for saying there is no virtue in the weak delay that postpones a sin already committed in the heart; and Browning is further right in thinking that this forceless temper leaves the soul an easy prey to every assault, and sinks it below all achievement. Only noble aspiration can lift the man above the fogs of lower life where he may see those truths that beckon and allure; only the strenuous soul whose righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and pharisees may attain to the sight of God and

> all that chivalry of his,
> The soldier-saints who, row on row,
> Burn upward each to his point of bliss.

If I have succeeded in making at all clear what I deem the essential characteristics of all Browning's poetry, I need say little of its value. It is a spiritual tonic. When at its best, it combines force of passion with depth of thought as hardly any other poetry since the Elizabethan days, and has the power of that large elder verse to inspire and dilate. It can never be genuinely popular. It has too little of sensuous beauty for that, is too careless of the obvious and superficial interests of life, too deeply freighted with the les-

sons of experience. For the same reasons, it must always be especially the poetry of middle life. Browning, I suspect, will never get the ear of sweet sixteen. He didn't care to. The simple charm of inexperienced youth you seldom find in his verse, and when you do, it is generally with some hint of its slightness or transiency:

> By a cornfield-side, a-flutter with poppies.
> Hark, those two in the hazel coppice—
> A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
> Making love, say—
> The happier they!
> Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
> And let them pass—as they will too soon,
> With the beanflowers' boon,
> And the blackbird's tune,
> And May, and June!

Youth is the bright frontispiece of life; but our main interest is in the book itself. Ogniben, in *A Soul's Tragedy*—one of the shrewdest, most original characters Browning ever drew —says with quiet irony, "Youth, with its beauty and grace, would seem bestowed on us for some such reason as to make us partly endurable till we have time for really becoming so of ourselves, without their aid; when they leave us." But Browning is the only poet I know who can really reconcile one to growing old. We know what the usual poetic tone is toward old age, the tone of regret, or at best of resignation,—

> The foot less prompt to meet the morning dew
> The heart less bounding to emotion new.

There is, to be sure, another kind of poetry of old age, the poetry of sentimental retrospect, such as *John Anderson My Jo,* and *The Miller's Daughter.* But this is a sham—it is all written by young men. Whenever you come upon verse of that sort, be assured the writer is not turned of thirty. The really old people know better. They feel that no philosophy of life's afternoon can atone for the faded poetry of its morning. But Browning, I verily believe, is

the one poet who thoroughly knows how to grow old. He has the wealth of ripened experience, but he keeps also the bounding life and eager, forward-looking hopes of youth. All seasons meet in him. He reaps the harvests of life's autumn, but he has still in his heart the joys of its spring. For myself, of later years, when I have a birthday I read the only modern poem I know that is really helpful on such occasions, Robert Browning's *Rabbi Ben Ezra*. Let me close by reading its opening and closing stanzas that show how Robert Browning welcomed the swift-coming years:

Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the first was made:
Our times are in his hand
Who saith, "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust God: see all, nor be afraid!"
. . . . . .
So, take and use thy work:
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same!

ART, LOVE, AND RELIGION IN THE POETRY OF ROBERT BROWNING

I

AMONG the many pleasant anecdotes of Mr. Browning that have been told since his death is one to the effect that a very young lady who had just been introduced to him one evening in London and who evidently had little knowledge of his poetry, said to the great man somewhat timidly, "I don't know whether you care for music, Mr. Browning, but if you do, my mother, Lady J——, is having some on Monday." "Why, my dear!" said Browning with the hearty sympathetic manner so characteristic of him, "Care for music? I care for nothing else."

The love of music was born in him. Very likely he inherited it, with the romantic emotional strain in his blood, from his maternal grandmother, who was a Creole, born in the West Indies. With Browning's own mother also, a woman of great depth of feeling, music was a passion. Mr. Sharp in his *Life of Browning* tells a pretty story of the childhood of the poet. One afternoon his mother was playing in the dusk of twilight to herself, when she was startled by a sound behind her. Glancing round, she beheld a little white figure distinct against an oak bookcase, and could just discern two large, wistful eyes looking earnestly at her. The next moment the child had sprung into her arms, sobbing passionately at he knew not what, but, as his pangs of emotion subsided, whispering over and over, with shy urgency, "Play! Play!" Those evening hours of his mother's—happy hours of darkness, solitude, and music—were among the tenderest lifelong memories of Browning. Every reader of his poetry knows what manifold proof of

his love of music there is in every volume; and the musicians say that such poems as *A Toccata of Galuppi's,* or *Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha,* or *Abt Vogler* betray considerable technical knowledge of the art. Certainly such poems are remarkable examples of Browning's power to interpret the spirit and meaning of music. I have sometimes thought it singular that with his keen susceptibility to the charm of music, Browning's own faculty of poetic utterance should have had so little musical quality,—at all events, so little clear and haunting melody.

But I don't know that Browning's love for music was any deeper than his love for painting, indeed for all kinds of art. No modern poet, I suppose, had such an eager and intelligent interest in all forms of art. It isn't merely that he has a large group of poems dealing exclusively with art or artists, though there are more than a score of such poems, —*Fra Lippo, Andrea del Sarto, Pictor Ignotus, Old Pictures in Florence, The Guardian-Angel, Abt Vogler, A Toccata of Galuppi's* and the rest; it is rather that almost all his best work is saturated with the history and the spirit of art. Most of his life was passed in Italy, and of all the many English poet-lovers of Italy, he loved her most.

> Italy, my Italy!
> Queen Mary's saying serves for me—
> (When fortune's malice
> Lost her, Calais)
> Open my heart and you will see
> Graved inside of it, "Italy."
> Such lovers old are I and she:
> So it always was, so ever shall be!

Yet it wasn't chiefly her history that Browning cared for. The Italy he loved was not the great past Italy that holds the memories of the world. It was rather the artist's Italy that captivated him, I think. He loved his Italy not so much because of its august historical associations with the early world, as because there, at every turn, in every square, in every dim and shabby church, you might come upon some statue, tomb, fresco, painting,—some effort of man to ex-

press himself in art. He knew the history of the early Christian painters a good deal better, I suspect, than the history of the early Roman emperors. His longer poems, like *The Ring and the Book,* are full of traces of minute and loving study of the art of Italy; while in all the score of volumes he wrote during his life in Italy, I doubt whether there is a single passage expressive of that solemn sense of the irrevocable past, that broad feeling for the general life of man, which Scott and Byron felt so keenly. The historic sense was very feeble in Browning. The rise and fall of states, the social life of man as embodied in institutions, the broad movements of men in the mass, political or military, —these things which loom so large on the pages of history, Browning didn't care for. He didn't think of them. His interest was not in man, but in individual men and women. And that is the reason why he cared so much for art. For art is the only way the individual has of perpetuating his personality. Art to Browning means always the expression of spiritual aspiration, the effort of the individual after larger and higher life. It is the record of our continual strivings after an ideal we can never fully attain. Not to copy, though never so accurately, the beauty that the eye may see, but to reveal, even to suggest, inadequately, but with ever repeated effort, some higher beauty, some divine truth,—this is the work of art.

It was natural that with these views Browning should care little for technical excellence. In the poem, *Old Pictures in Florence,* he expresses a most emphatic preference for the crudest work of the early Christian painters over the most perfect statue Greek chisel ever cut. And that because while the statue is the skillful embodiment of a complete, self-sufficient beauty, in the pictures the artist is struggling, albeit in rude and untaught fashion, to utter his soul, to express the invisible things of God:

> On which I conclude, that the early painters,
> To cries of "Greek Art and what more wish you?"—
> Replied, "To become now self-acquainters,
> And paint man man, whatever the issue!

Make new hopes shine through the flesh they fray,
New fears aggrandize the rags and tatters:
To bring the invisible full into play!
Let the visible go to the dogs—what matters?"

Indeed complete technical excellence would seem to Browning to indicate some deficiency of soul. If the hand can execute perfectly all that the imagination can conceive, it is a proof that the imagination has little sight of the highest things; that the artist is losing that temper of ideal aspiration in which alone is the salvation of the man. The saddest failure is that of him who feels that he has consummate skill, but no vision. This is the pathos of that poem I sometimes think the most pathetic Browning ever wrote, the *Andrea del Sarto*. Andrea is the faultless painter. His unerring pencil can mend the lines of Raphael himself. Yet as he sits by his window in the hush of twilight and looks backward over his life, he knows that life a failure. In his heart he knows that the great artists are not those who skillfully execute but those who greatly conceive; that success consists not in doing perfectly what you undertake, but rather in nobly daring more than any man can perfectly attain;

a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
—Or what's a heaven for?

I hardly recall any picture in modern poetry more saddening. And it is conceived with vivid dramatic truth; in the tone of the man's speech, in the very atmosphere of that still, gray evening that hangs upon the slopes of Fiesoli, there is something listless, hopeless. It is his wife, you remember, to whom he is speaking:

I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly the evening through,

I might get up to-morrow to my work,
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
. . . . . .
A common grayness silvers everything,—
All in a twilight, you and I alike
—You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone you know),—but I, at every point;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self,
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight-piece . . . . .
. . . . . .
. . . . You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,
But you can hear at least when people speak:
And that cartoon, the second from the door
—It is the thing, Love! so such thing should be—
Behold Madonna!—I am bold to say.
I can do with my pencil what I know,
What I see, what at bottom of my heart
I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,
I do not boast, perhaps: . . .
. . . . . .
I do what many dream of all their lives,
—Dream? strive to do, and agonize to do,
And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
To paint a little thing like that you smeared
Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,—
Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
(I know his name, no matter)—so much less!
Well, less is more, Lucrezia: I am judged.
There burns a truer light of God in them,
In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain,
Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,

Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
Enter and take their place there sure enough,
Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
The sudden blood of these men! at a word—
Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.
I, painting from myself and to myself,
Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
Or their praise either. . . . .
. . . . . .
Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-gray
Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!

And you will notice the crowning pathos of the picture is that Andrea sits down at the end, acquiescent, humbly content in feeble resignation. The spring of aspiration is broken in him. He sees that other men are doing higher things, but he gets no sight of that unattainable ideal which allures and inspires. A vague sense of failure, a gnawing envy, but no noble discontent,

. . . that bids nor sit nor stand but go!

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less.
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
. . . . . .
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance.
. . . . . .
. . . What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance—

So fades the soul that had the painter's cunning hand but not the artist's yearning heart.

Similarly in his own art, Browning was always inclined to rank the poet's work, not by the perfection of its form, but by the power of its spirit. Shelley was the one whom, of all modern poets, he unquestionably admired most. It was Shelley's poetry that had first set his heart on fire, in those early days of the twenties when Shelley was exile and outcast. Browning never forgot that night,—a soft May night it was, he used to say, and two nightingales from the

boskage of a garden hard by were striving with each other in song,—when he first turned over the leaves of that priceless shabby first edition of Shelley, *Epipsychidion, Alastor, Adonais;* a-tremble all night over those pages in which the most thrilling of poets lays bare his soul. In that night Browning's muse took possession of him. In his very first volume, *Pauline,* he apostrophizes Shelley with a fine rapture, and to the end of his days Shelley was for him the most fascinating of poets. Yet he never approved any of Shelley's most characteristic opinions; he never shared Shelley's bitter distrust of all existing institutions, or sympathized with that doctrinaire revolutionary temper of which Shelley is our best poetical representative. Nor do I think he was enthralled, as so many have been and ever will be, by the piercing sweetness of Shelley's verse, where poetry subtly passes into purest music. It was rather the power of concentrated enthusiasm in Shelley that captivated Browning. He loved Shelley because Shelley more than any other poet seems an embodied aspiration, a pure flame of desire. Browning could forget everything else for that. Those of you who are confirmed Browning lovers and have read the *Parleyings* will remember his parley with old Christopher Smart whom, says Sam Johnson, they call mad because he wants to pray with everybody and has a dislike for clean linen. But this poor creature, whose only poem—amid acres of rubbish—was scratched with a key on the wall of his madhouse cell, Browning deliberately ranks with Milton and Keats because, though his art was bungling and his mind crazed, he and he alone between Milton and Keats

> pierced the screen
> 'Twixt thing and word, lit language straight from soul,—
> . . . . . .
> . . . shapely or uncouth,
> Fire-suffused through and through, one blaze of truth.

It would be hard to find more extreme proof that in Browning's artistic verdicts the form counts for nothing and the spirit for everything.

It will occur to many readers of Browning that had he

been less indifferent to artistic workmanship, it might have been better for his own verse. As it is, he always seemed fearful that the divine *afflatus* might vanish in the painful delays of composition. This, I think, is one reason of his haste, his disjointed structure, his prosaic diction. He dared not stay to cull and order his phrase for fear his thought might cool before he could get it into shape.

Browning's strenuous insistence on the spirit of ideal aspiration as the only element of value in art is, at all events, a most healthy antidote to the modern cant about art for art's sake. They tell us nowadays sometimes that we must divorce our ethics and our æsthetics. We have no right, so the critics say, to ask or even to think about the moral significance of our painting or our poem; is it beautiful, is it well wrought?—these are the only relevant questions. Well, it is quite possible to divorce your ethical sense from your æsthetical; that is true enough. Browning knew that. You may be sure he hadn't filled himself with the history of Italian art without making the acquaintance of many a man of cunning skill and nicest taste who was nevertheless a born child of the devil, and all his lifetime wrought the will of his father. But Browning insists that such a man is never the true artist, rather the fine artisan, craftsman, or most likely only the connoisseur. Among Browning's men and women there are several most remarkable specimens of this type of character. Take the Bishop who is ordering his tomb at St. Praxed's, for instance. The dying old prelate hardly seems to have any soul left worth the saving; no reverence, no affection; no thought of righteousness or judgment to come; only a feverish apprehension that he may be cheated of his tomb at last, and a gloating, luxurious sense of that rich artistry he hopes to lay his clay under:

> And I shall fill my slab of basalt there,
> And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
> With those nine columns round me, two and two,
> . . . . . .
> Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
> As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse.
> . . . . . .

Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli,*
Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
. . . . . .
So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
. . . . . .
Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—
'T was ever antique-black I meant!

Perhaps a still better example of the same type of character is that Duke of Ferrara who, while negotiating with an envoy for the hand of a new Duchess, dwells with the connoisseur's fine relish upon the excellent picture of his last one. It is one of the best specimens of the dramatic monologue. With wonderful skill, Browning, in these few lines, makes this Duke reveal his whole character,—his polished and faultless courtesy, his exquisite tastes, and his cold, hard heart:

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will 't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Frà Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat:" such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,

Too easily impressed: she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men,—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
—E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

So true is it that the hardest heart may take the finest polish.

There is surely no gospel in art so long as art is thought of thus, as a means to tickle the senses or to embellish the mere outside of life. But if art be, as I have said Browning always conceives it, the expression of individual striving after spiritual ideals, then it as surely has a power to purify and uplift. It stimulates those desires that are the spring of noble living. Nay, in its highest reaches it gives us glimpses into the infinite; it fascinates us with larger vision

and diviner beauty than of earth, until the yearning of the artist passes insensibly into religious longing and hope. Shall there not be endless room for aspiration? The desires that earth is too strait for, shall they not find otherwhere their goal? That is the thought of the noblest of Browning's poems of art, the *Abt Vogler*. Abt Vogler has been playing upon his orchestration, rapt into an ecstasy of lonely wonder and awe at the structure of sound he has reared. It is only sound, to be sure, the world is full of such, loud and soft, high and low, that is all: but as its harmonies grew and thickened, what meanings it seemed to reveal; how its passion climbed to heaven,

> And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach the earth,
> As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale the sky:

till, for a time, the bonds of this earthly life seemed loosed, "there was no more near nor far,"—and the entranced player seemed in some divine companionship whether in the body or out of the body he knew not—

> All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish of my soul,
> All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed visibly forth,
> All through music and me!

Or say, rather,

> here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
> Existent behind all laws.

But as his musing fingers desert the keys, it fades away, as all good things of earth do. It was a glimpse only, a star, one moment's shine of heaven. "Gone, and the good tears start." For why must our bright moments be fleeting, uncertain, varied, when our natures cry out, God knows, for the certain and enduring, "for the same, same self, same love, same God"?

> Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable Name?
> Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands!
> What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same?
> Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power expands?

There shall never be one lost good! What was, shall live as before;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound;
What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good more;
On the earth the broken arcs; in the heaven, a perfect round.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist;
Not its semblance, but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by and by.

Thus do the highest imaginings of art blend into that pure flame of aspiration that burns and trembles up to God.

II

In 1845 there was living—nay, it seemed likely slowly dying—in a darkened room of her father's house in London, a delicate, fragile woman. "A slight figure," says Miss Mitford, who knew her well in those years, "with a shower of dark curls falling on each side of a most expressive face, large tender eyes richly fringed by dark lashes, and a smile like a sunbeam." Fame had already come to her, but love had kept aloof. Her father was a well-meaning, hard, hide-bound man. Her mother had long been dead. Her only brother, her only near friend, she had seen drown before her eyes. She seemed left alone, and though always keenly alive in spirit, yet fading slowly out of the world. It was at the door of this house, No. 50 Wimpole Street, that Robert Browning, introduced by his friend John Kenyon, knocked one evening early in that year 1845 to meet for the first time Elizabeth Barrett. Their poetry had made them known to each other before; for Miss Barrett had already written *Lady Geraldine's Courtship,* and the *Rhyme of the Duchess May,* and *The Cry of the Children,* and some half a score more of lyrics that the world is likely to remember; while Robert Browning had already written *Pippa*

Passes, and the first part of *Saul,* and *Evelyn Hope,* and all the rest of those pomegranates,

> which, if cut deep down the middle,
> Show a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity.

But at this first meeting their mutual interest and admiration passed instantly into love,—the love of two strongly contrasted, complementary natures,—the love of the most robust and virile of poets for the most delicate, sensitive, spiritual.

What followed, all the world—so far as the world was ever allowed to know it—knows very well. On the twelfth of September of the following year Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett stepped into Marylebone Church by themselves and were married,—so quietly that even their best friends did not hear of it for some time afterwards,—and a few days later they started for Italy and life. Before that new joy, Death, whose summoning finger had almost been laid upon that woman's pulses, drew back abashed. Love brought her health, and knowledge, and song. It was in Pisa that she first showed her husband the manuscript of that series of poems in which the solemn and sanctifying joy that had dawned upon her life found its expression, those *Sonnets from the Portuguese,* as she chose to call them, which, I think, in their intensity of emotion and in a certain melodious largeness of utterance may challenge comparison with any cycle of sonnets since Shakespeare's,—poems such as none but a woman could have written, and no other woman has written:

> My own Beloved, who hast lifted me
> From this drear flat of earth where I was thrown,
> And, in betwixt the languid ringlets, blown
> A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully
> Shines out again, as all the angels see,
> Before thy saving kiss! My own, my own,
> Who camest to me when the world was gone,
> And I who looked for only God, found *thee!*
> I find thee; I am safe, and strong, and glad.
> As one who stands in dewless asphodel

Looks backward on the tedious time he had
In the upper life,—so I, with bosom-swell,
Make witness, here, between the good and bad,
That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves as well.

Yet this is the verse of no clinging weakling; but of a woman who could sing, in the same years, and in strains equally inspired, the sacred joy of wedded love and the high ardors of a militant nature.

The dearest poet I ever knew,—
Dearest, and greatest, and best to me,

said Robert Browning, twenty years after she was gone from his side.

But nothing either husband or wife could ever write was half so perfect a poem as that wedded life of fifteen years in Italy. What house is enshrined in more sacred memories than that Casa Guidi, from the balcony of which on that still summer night, when flame fell silently from cloud to cloud, Robert Browning leaned musing to see the tragedy of *The Ring and the Book* act itself again before his inner eye; that house in front of which Elizabeth Barrett Browning heard the little child go singing past, "O bella Liberta, O bella"; the house in which, so many an evening, the husband watched his wife

Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Mutely, my heart knows how—

When, if I think but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme.

That was the ideal marriage.

Robert Browning was no man to turn his life inside out for the world to see, and he addressed only one poem to his wife in her lifetime, I believe; but I sometimes think that one, the epilogue to *Men and Women,* is the most perfect poem of husband to wife in our language; his love has such manly reticence, such solemn sense of a sacred inner life which the stranger intermeddleth not with, and which may not utter itself in speech:

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know.
Only this is sure—the sight were other,
Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,
Dying now impoverished here in London.
God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
One to show a woman when he loves her!

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
This to you—yourself my moon of poets!
Ah, but that's the world's side, there's the wonder,
Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you!
There, in turn I stand with them and praise you—
Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
But the best is when I glide from out them,
Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
Come out on the other side, the novel
Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing it,
Drew one angel—borne, see, on my bosom!

And after that June morning of 1861 when the soul of Elizabeth Barrett Browning took sanctuary within the blue, her husband never gave a volume to the world but that somewhere in its pages, often in phrases so veiled that only those who knew him could read it, might be found some utterance of his unchanging love, some assured belief that bridges "the distance and the dark":

Hold on, hope hard in the subtle thing
That's spirit; though cloistered fast, soar free;
Account as wood, brick, stone, this ring
Of the rueful neighbors, and—forth to thee!

Now this man, thus love-learned, ought surely to have written us good love poetry,—and he did; the deepest, truest, most passionate, and most pure. It is true, indeed, that Browning's love poetry is not exactly the article usually supplied us under that name. Ordinary love verse, like whatsoever else belongs to the spring time of life, is usually

a pretty enough thing. Far be it from me to depreciate it—to depreciate it would be to forget Burns and youth and morning. If philosophy ever quite takes out of us the liking for such poetry as *O, my luve is like a red, red rose,* why the blood of the race will be getting thin and the hearts of us mostly changing into gray brain matter. But we shall have to admit that this kind of verse has an especial charm for the unriper seasons of life. The poetic raptures of Brown to Chloris, with which we all feel doubtless some thrill of present or recollected sympathy, are liable to seem a little out of date when Chloris has become plain Mrs. Brown, undoubtedly stouter than she used to be, and with a son just entering college. And this love which, as Laertes says, is but a violet in the youth of primy nature, though it makes the world go round,—and the circulating libraries,—is yet hardly the stuff out of which the greatest literature is made.

Now in Browning's books this mere youthful passion, all fire and dew, is very seldom found. The people in Browning's books have usually attained their majority. We shall not forget that when Robert Browning first met Elizabeth Barrett he was thirty-three years of age, and she was thirty-nine. Keats in one of his later sonnets mourns that he may no more have "relish in the faery power of unreflecting love." That is what Browning never had much relish of—"the faery power of unreflecting love." If the love in his poetry hasn't been deepened and ripened by the mellowing years, you will usually find that it has been tested by the stress of some supreme trial, or in some way grown into the life, got hold upon all the man's powers. Browning's lovers are not simply nice young people who haven't anything else to do. Love in his verse is not the mere sentiment, rather the deep controlling passion, urging into action intellect, emotions, will. There is no poetry more intense; but its passion is born not of the flesh but of the spirit. His men and women love like immortal souls. Even in his lightest, most graceful verse on this theme there is always some sense of the depth and sanctity of love, and its supreme value in life. Take, for instance, that charming

poem, *Love Among the Ruins*. Here, for once, there is, to be sure, no action, no character, no thought; only a pair of lovers alone and happy in the wide, gray, folding twilight. Yet how wonderfully the situation intensifies our sympathy with their passion. All the wide, age-long desolation about them, all the life centuries ago swept into oblivion to make room for them, only throws into relief the power and beauty of their young love. It is one of Browning's most fascinating pictures, I think, and its low tones and still evening lights are all a-tremble with emotion:

Where the quiet-colored end of evening smiles
Miles and miles
On the solitary pastures where our sheep
Half-asleep
Tinkle homeward through the twilight, stray or stop
As they crop—
Was the site once of a city great and gay,
(So they say)
Of our country's very capital, its prince
Ages since
Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
Peace or war.

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,
As you see,
To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
From the hills
Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
Into one,)
Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
Up like fires
O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
Bounding all,
Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed,
Twelve abreast.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
Never was!
Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
And embeds
Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
Stock or stone—
Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
Long ago;

Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
Struck them tame;
And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
Bought and sold.

. . . . . .

And I know, while thus the quiet-colored eve
Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many-tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished gray
Melt away—
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless, dumb
Till I come.

. . . . . .

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
South and North,
And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
As the sky,
Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
Gold, of course.
Oh heart! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns!
Earth's returns
For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin!
Shut them in,
With their triumphs and their glories and the rest!
Love is best.

But poems like this are not common in Browning's work. More characteristic is the little poem that may be called a companion picture to the one I just read, *Two in the Campagna*. Here the two are not young; they are rather husband and wife, whose love is not a thing of yesterday. And the theme of the poem is not their love merely, but rather one of the subtle longings born of love, the longing for spiritual nearness and union which comes when there flashes upon us, as sometimes for a moment there will, that lonesome, almost terrifying sense of the infinite distance separating every human soul from every other human soul,—the absolute isolation of our personality. It seems so impos-

sible after all to get near even those we love the best, into whose eyes we look as if indeed we saw the soul there:

> I would I could adopt your will,
> See with your eyes, and set my heart
> Beating by yours, ...
> . . . . . .
> No. I yearn upward, touch you close,
> Then stand away. I kiss your cheek,
> Catch your soul's warmth,—I pluck the rose
> And love it more than tongue can speak—
> Then the good minute goes.

The waste of restless verdure about them in the Campagna, the fitful solitary breeze, the abandon of nature, all seem filled with this vague, hopeless desire,

> Infinite passion, and the pain
> Of finite hearts that yearn.

There are many of Browning's poems that, like this, suggest, often in an elusive but thrilling way, some spiritual desire that love awakens, vague it may be but intense; conjecture of truth else unthought of, wonder, surmise.

But Browning's best love verse is not a picture of any moods, however deep or tender, or of any passing desire or yearning; rather it is the exhibition of love as the moving power of life, the mightiest of forces to urge man to noble ends. Dick Steele once wrote to his Prue,—"Madam: It is the hardest thing in the World to be in Love and yet attend businesse." I think it seems to be so,—in books at all events. Your hero of the average novel isn't really good for much until he is married, and then he isn't any longer a hero. But in Browning's men and women, love really makes life more efficient, and what is better, it makes life broader and more generous. Browning's lovers are not shut up in any sweet isolation. Truth to say, your ordinary lover—in literature if not in life—is a selfish creature. What we call love is usually a disguised and embellished form of covetousness; which is idolatry, as Scripture saith. It is bent chiefly on

acquisition. The lover like the lawyer is intent to "win his suit." If he does it, he is insufferably complacent; if he doesn't, he is worse. Sometimes he is plaintive and sentimental; sometimes he is sulky and Byronic; sometimes he is desperate and declamatory, like Tennyson's bumptious lover in *Locksley Hall;* sometimes he plucks up a forced and defiant cheerfulness,

> If of herself she will not love,
> Nothing can make her:
> The devil take her!

But in any case it is evident that his affection has been pretty largely alloyed by selfish desire,—

> If she think not well of me,
> What care I how fair she be?

Not so sing Mr. Browning's lovers. Their love is an unselfish, spiritual passion, and as such is its own reward. It means entire self-sacrifice, not so much to a person, as to an ideal. If it be returned, well; if not, why still it is better to have had the soul uplifted and its vision opened by a generous affection than to have lived without it. Browning's rejected suitors never mope or rail.

In that charming drama, *Colombe's Birthday,* the lover, Valence, plain advocate of Cleves, has for a little space deemed it not impossible that he might win the hand of the Duchess, Colombe; but resigns his hope of it to his rival because, as it seems, the interest of the lady demands such sacrifice. He is speaking, you remember, to that rival, and the Duchess stands by

> Had I seen such an one,
> As I loved her—weighing thoroughly that word—
> So should my task be to evolve her love:
> If for myself!—if for another—well.

Says his rival:

> Heroic truly! And your sole reward,—
> The secret pride in yielding up love's right?

And Valence replies:

> Who thought upon reward? And yet how much
> Comes after—oh, what amplest recompense!
> Is the knowledge of her, naught? the memory, naught?
> —Lady, should such an one have looked on you,
> Ne'er wrong yourself so far as quote the world
> And say, love can go unrequited here!
> You will have blessed him to his whole life's end—
> Low passions hindered, baser cares kept back,
> All goodness cherished where you dwelt—and dwell.
> What would he have? He holds you—you, both form
> And mind, in his,—where self-love makes such room
> For love of you, he would not serve you now
> The vulgar way,—repulse your enemies,
> Win you new realms, or best, to save the old
> Die blissfully—that's past so long ago!
> He wishes you no need, thought, care of him—
> Your good, by any means, himself unseen,
> Away, forgotten!—He gives that life's task up.

No wonder that in the light of this noble devotion the Duchess can read her own heart; and as Valence turns to retire asking only a withered bunch of flowers she wore, she falls into his arms:

> I take him—give up Juliers and the world.
> This is my Birthday.

If I were a woman, I should pronounce Browning's lovers the most manly specimens of their class.

It is evident to any student that Browning's ideal life was not one of prudent control and self-restraint, but rather one of strenuous impassioned aspiration and endeavor; and that he sometimes seems a little over-indulgent of passion and impulse because he knew that only in passion and impulse can such a life find motive power. He knew that the one great beneficent power that must be behind all noblest effort is love—not the self-seeking sentiment, but the self-renouncing, aspiring passion; love for woman, or for man, or for God. Without love of some sort, a life at once strenuous and unselfish is impossible. To miss it,

therefore, "for whatsoever other gain," is to lose the one supreme motive of life.

"It once might have been, once only," says the woman who looks back to the early years when both she and the man who should have been her lover slighted love for art. The years have brought what folks call success, but

> Each life unfulfilled, you see;
> It hangs still, patchy and scrappy:
> We have not sighed deep, laughed free,
> Starved, feasted, despaired,—been happy.
>
> And nobody calls you a dunce,
> And people suppose me clever:
> This could but have happened once,
> And we missed it, lost it forever.

Browning is not here encouraging the precipitancy of callow, juvenile sentiment; but deliberately to smother a generous affection at the bidding of selfish prudence or convention, that does seem to him the most irretrievable error of life. And to a man of his temperament it was inevitable that such an error should seem not only most irretrievable but most dangerous. One of his most significant short poems he calls *Le Byron de Nos Jours,* and the Byron of our days, Browning would say, is not the man who flings the reins upon the neck of his appetites, but the wary, prudent old French academician, "famed for verse and worse," who has shut his heart against the one spontaneous impulse to a generous affection that ever knocked there, and so has turned over to the world, the flesh, and the devil, not only himself and the woman he ought to have loved, but two souls more, linked with theirs. "This you call wisdom?" says the woman years after,—

> The devil laughed at you in his sleeve!
> You knew not? That I well believe;
> Or you had saved two souls: nay, four.
>
> For Stephanie sprained last night her wrist,
> Ankle or something. "Pooh," cry you?
> At any rate she danced, all say,
> Vilely; her vogue has had its day.
> Here comes my husband from his whist.

And who shall deny that to have had the soul emancipated and inspired by the pure ardors of some unselfish devotion, even though at cost of all life's ease and honors, nay even at cost of life itself, is better than to prolong that life into cheerless years unwarmed and unuplifted by any generous passion. Such I am sure must be the verdict of every one who loves his Browning.

No other modern English poet has rendered with such intensity the spiritual power of a great passion. Take Caponsacchi and Pompilia in *The Ring and the Book*. *The Ring and the Book* is too long, the critics say; and I suppose it is,—longer than all Homer, I believe. The worst of which is, people get frightened and won't read it. But there is fire enough in Browning to glow all through it. And if you will read it, read it from the beginning; see the tragedy slowly reveal itself side after side: listen to the buzzing rumor of Rome about the story of it; slowly disentangle the truth from that close web of treachery and deceit; watch the desperate struggle of Pompilia, like some poor dazed and prisoned creature, to escape from the damnable villainies woven about her by her husband; see how every circumstance seems to conspire to make escape impossible, and the very effort to escape seem a crime; then see how a kind God shows to each other this suffering child-woman, Pompilia, and her rescuer, the noble soldier-priest, Caponsacchi,—each to the other like a vision of deliverance sent out of heaven, deliverance not indeed from the pains and ills of life, not even from cruel death, but to the woman strong deliverance out of shame and strife into the calm when, for some space before she dies, she may learn what life is for and what God's love is like; to the priest, sudden deliverance from a life of frivolities and hypocrisies into a higher realm where he can recognize the clear voice of God, see through all conventions and misleading appearances what is his real duty as priest of the Most High, and so leap to do it, flinging himself upon that God

Who reigns and rules out of this low world,—

read all this, and then say whether Robert Browning did not know the spiritual power and uplift of love!

Browning has written nothing more profound and subtle than his picture of the conflict of emotions in the priest, Caponsacchi, which are born of his love for the tortured, shamed, murdered wife and mother, Pompilia. Never was love more tender or more impassioned; his burning defense of her before the judge shows that; his reverent cherishing of the broken words that fell from her lips in that night of their escape, his agony at the thought that, after all, his efforts were unavailing to save her from the dagger of her husband:

> I thought I had saved her . . .
> It seems I simply sent her to her death.
> . . . . . .
> No, Sirs, I cannot have the lady dead!
> That erect form, flashing brow, fulgurant eye,
> That voice immortal (oh, that voice of hers!)
> . . . . . .
> I told you,—at one little roadside-place
> I spent a good half-hour, paced to and fro
> The garden; just to leave her free awhile,
> I plucked a handful of Spring herb and bloom:
> I might have sat beside her on the bench
> Where the children were: I wish the thing had been,
> Indeed: the event could not be worse, you know:
> One more half-hour of her saved! She's dead now, Sirs!

This is love, if anything ever was—that reverent love which is the beauty at the heart of men's adoration of the Virgin; but it is so different from that earthlier, self-seeking thing which often wears the name, no wonder Caponsacchi cries

> You know this is not love, Sirs,—it is faith,
> The feeling that there's God.

For, in truth, such utter self-denying passion as Caponsacchi implies some faith in a Divine Power that has made us capable of it. It has taught Caponsacchi that love is the source of all best duty; shown him, as he says, that

> Life and death
> Are means to an end, that passion uses both,
> Indisputably mistress of the man
> Whose form of worship is self-sacrifice.

And Pompilia, pale wayside flower that yet all tempests cannot crush, more wonderful still is the exhibition of what love hath done for her. I hardly remember in our literature such another picture of the terrible calm power of simple innocence, and of the wisdom that lies in those pure instincts God has put into a woman's heart. This child woman has learned to suffer, and she has learned, too, when suffering meant shame, no longer to suffer but thenceforth to fight: and then, just at the close of her short, starved life, by God's good grace, love has come to her. All love—the love that sanctifies the pangs and joys of motherhood:

> Nobody did me one disservice more,
> Spoke coldly or looked strangely, broke the love
> I lay in the arms of, till my boy was born,
> Born all in love, with nought to spoil the bliss
> A whole long fortnight: in a life like mine
> A fortnight filled with bliss is long and much.
> All women are not mothers of a boy,
> Though they live twice the length of my whole life,
> And, as they fancy, happily all the same.
> There I lay, then, all my great fortnight long,
> As if it would continue, broaden out
> Happily more and more, and lead to heaven:
> Christmas before me,—was not that a chance?
> I never realized God's birth before—
> How He grew likest God in being born.
> This time I felt like Mary, had my babe
> Lying a little on my breast like hers.

Beneath that benediction she can have a dying word of excuse even for her murderous husband,—the father of her babe:

> So he was made; he nowise made himself:
> I could not love him, but his mother did.

But her love for Caponsacchi, her angel of deliverance, that is strength and wisdom and trust to her, God's best gift never to be disavowed:

And this man, men call sinner? Jesus Christ!
Of whom men said, with mouths Thyself mad'st once,
"He hath a devil"—say he was Thy saint,
My Caponsacchi! Shield and show—unshroud
In Thine own time the glory of the soul
If aught obscure,—if ink-spot, from vile pens
Scribbling a charge against him—(I was glad
Then, for the first time, that I could not write)—
Flirted his way, have flecked the blaze!

For me,
'Tis otherwise: let men take, sift my thoughts
—Thoughts I throw like the flax for sun to bleach!
I did pray, do pray, in the prayer shall die,
"Oh, to have Caponsacchi for my guide!"
Ever the face upturned to mine, the hand
Holding my hand across the world,—a sense
That reads, as only such can read, the mark
God sets on woman, signifying so
She should—shall peradventure—be divine.

And if Caponsacchi calls his love faith, much more may Pompilia give that name to hers. This sunburst at set of her stormy day is but a gleam of that larger Divine Love in whom we may trust and fear no evil. Her babe, her soldier-priest, Pompilia's new love has taught her how they both are in the keeping of a higher, tenderer care than hers. Her dying words show that:

Weak souls, how we endeavor to be strong!
. . . . . .
Shall not God stoop the kindlier to his work,
His marvel of creation, foot would crush,
Now that the hand he trusted to receive
And hold it, lets the treasure fall perforce?
The better; he shall have in orphanage
His own way all the clearlier: if my babe
Outlived the hour—and he has lived two weeks—
It is through God who knows I am not by.
Who is it makes the soft gold hair turn black,
And sets the tongue, might lie so long at rest,
Trying to talk? Let us leave God alone!
Why should I doubt he will explain in time
What I feel now, but fail to find the words?

No, nowhere in English poetry since Shakespeare let fall the pen with which he had written the last of his tragedies, do I find anything that can so purify the soul by pity and terror; nay, not even in Shakespeare do I find anything that can so uplift the soul with the assurance of a kinship between our human love and that which is divine, as can this story of Pompilia and Caponsacchi.

III

Thus may we see that in Browning's thought, art and love, like all other forms of aspiration, pass up into religion. So must it be with almost all great poetry. For if poetry is a picture of life it cannot leave out that department of life to which, more than to any other, belong wonder and desire and hope. Certainly in the nineteenth century all English poets of the first order—save perhaps Keats—concerned themselves, in one way or another, with man's religious beliefs and longings.

But I am inclined to think Robert Browning in many respects the most prominently and positively Christian poet of the last generation. And this not principally because he was an avowed believer in some formulated creed—though he was gratifyingly orthodox in that direction, a good Presbyterian deacon of the Scotch Free Church in Florence and passing about the plate for the alms every Sunday—but I call him our great Christian poet rather because he held all his life, in spite of all the doubts and questionings of his age—of which he was by no means ignorant—a healthy, robust, hopeful faith in the great essentials of Christianity. He is uttering his own credo when he makes the dying John say:

> the acknowledgment of God in Christ
> Accepted by thy reason, solves for thee
> All questions in the earth and out of it,
> And has so far advanced thee to be wise.

That indicates not only what he believes, but why he believes it. For Browning's faith was based not so much upon ex-

ternal or historical evidence as upon a profound internal conviction of the fitness of the Christian revelation to our deepest needs.

I have said that he was the poet not of man, but of individual men; and moreover that he loved all forms of pronounced and aggressive personality, in which the human life is at the full. This yearning, restless soul of ours, surely we know that at least, each for himself, and none but a fool will ask for proof:

> Quoth a young Sadducee
> "Reader of many rolls,
> Is it so certain we:
> Have, as they tell us, souls?"
>
> "Son, there is no reply!"
> The Rabbi bit his beard:
> "Certain a soul have *I*—
> *We* may have none," he sneered.

And what mean the endless longings and aspirations of this soul when it most truly lives; its spurnings of every step on which it climbs to some yet higher idea? That all this means nothing; that the spark which disturbs our clod flickers out and falls into our mortal dust; that the ideal which shines beyond our highest aspiring is only an illusion that mocks and fades; that there is no wider scene, no higher justice: this is intolerable. Must it not rather be that we were meant to hear some diviner voice saying,

> 'Wherefore did I create for thee that ear
> Hungry for music, and direct thine eye
> To where I hold a seven-stringed instrument,
> Unless I meant thee to beseech me play?'

The argument is old; but few men can feel its convincing power as a man of Browning's intensity and fullness of life must feel it. He has drawn it out repeatedly in his later work, as in *Ferishtah's Fancies* (whence the lines just quoted are taken) and in *La Saisiaz;* and I think still better in those earlier poems in which the conclusion is dramatically implied without so much array of logical process—in that

touching and truthful poem, *Cleon,* for instance. Cleon, the pagan poet, who has written the epos on a hundred plates of gold, and the little chant so sure to rise from every fishing bark when seamen haul the net, Cleon, sculptor, painter, philosopher, writes to answer the question of King Protus whether he have not attained the proper end of life, and how, therefore,

> now life closeth up,
> I face death with success in my right hand.

The burden of his yearning answer is that every access of knowledge and power, every advance above the perfect animal life only deepens the soul's despair; to know our own infinite powers and infinite desires, while we know that tomorrow we are not,—what joy is that? We climb the heights of knowledge only to perish the lonelier there.

And the suggestion of Protus that the poet has an immortality in his works, and thus really lives in the thoughts of men to be,—that fiction of an immortality of influence that our modern positivists juggle with, the hope to "join the choir invisible, whose music is the gladness of the world,"—this sorry substitute for our warm, personal life, Cleon sadly puts aside as every man who sees straight and speaks truth must:

> "But," sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat,
> To find thee trip on such a mere word)—"what
> Thou writest, paintest, stays; that does not die:
> Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,
> And Æschylus, because we read his plays!"
> Why, if they live still, let them come and take
> Thy slave in my despite, drink, from thy cup,
> Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive?
> Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,
> In this, that every day my sense of joy
> Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
> By power and insight) more enlarged, more keen;
> While every day my hairs fall more and more,
> My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase—
> The horror quickening still from year to year,
> The consummation coming past escape,

When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy—
When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,
Alive still, in the phrase of such as thou,
I, I the feeling, thinking, acting man,
The man who loved his life so over-much,
Sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
I dare at times imagine to my need
Some future state revealed to us by Zeus,
Unlimited in capability
For joy, as this is in desire for joy.

Browning's own conclusion is clear. He does not, as some of his critics charge, fall into the error of claiming that the desire for immortality is itself proof enough of immortality.

Zeus has not yet revealed it; and alas,
He must have done so, were it possible,

sighs the pagan. Nay, God has revealed it, says the Christian, and the heart God hath made leaps to accept the revelation God hath given.

More convincing still to Browning's thought as a proof of the truth and divinity of the Christian revelation is its power to meet the demand of our human soul for love. Love we know to be the highest thing in us. Nay, no power however mighty, no wisdom however infinite can be so high a thing as love—

the loving worm within its clod
Were diviner than a loveless god
Amid his worlds, I will dare to say.

But where is the proof of that larger, diviner love? In the world about us with its imperfection, its evil, its violence? Or even in the wondrous mechanism of the Universe? Nay; Power there, and Wisdom, but not Love, or at best love veiled and only half seen. Optimist as Browning was, he knew that the world outside us cannot reveal a loving God. And yet is it credible that while we are so inferior to the Creator in power and wisdom, we should be his superior

in love, the divinest attribute of all? Says the good old Pope in *The Ring and the Book:*

> Is there strength there?—enough: intelligence?
> Ample: but goodness in a like degree?
> Not to the human eye in the present state,
> An isoscele deficient in the base.
> What lacks, then, of perfection fit for God
> But just the instance which this tale supplies
> Of love without a limit?

This argument is implicated in almost all Browning's poems on religious subjects, but nowhere does it receive such inspiring statement as in that glorious poem, *Saul.* Some of Browning's later writing on religious themes seems to me little better than versified syllogism, swift, subtle, intellectual, but with too little distinctly poetic charm or inspiration. But *Saul* I think the noblest religious poem of the last half century. Its long bounding lines lift us, on wave after wave of hope and ardor, up to that closing burst of genuinely prophetic rapture where David foresees the Christ to be. It is the best expression I know in modern poetry of the rapt vision of the seer. And this high assurance is born, as I said, of the conviction that the divine love cannot be less than the human, and that it must, therefore, some day reveal itself more clearly to man. To rouse the desponding Saul, David has tried the charm of song, the pride of achievement, the radiance of fame, the long hope of praise from generations yet to be; but all have sufficed only to lift the great king a little out of his mood, and fix his eye in placid regard upon the singer. At last Saul slowly

> Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care
> Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow: through my hair
> The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head, with kind power—
> All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.
> Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinized mine—
> And oh, all my heart how it loved him!

And out of that great love slowly dawns upon David that great truth that love implies:

"In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?
Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the parts shift?
Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the end, what Began?
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?
Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,
To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower
Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,
Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)
These goods things being given, to go on, and give one more, the best?

. . . . . .

"I believe it! 'Tis thou, God, that givest,'tis I who receive:
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.
All's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my prayer
As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.

. . . . . .

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou—so wilt thou!
So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown—

. . . . . .

As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being Beloved!
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.
'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! my flesh, that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever: a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

With this firm grasp on a few great spiritual truths, Browning went through life like a crusader. His faith was robust and militant. He didn't tie himself up by the details of any creed, very likely; but he had the heroic enthusiasm of a great conviction. He is the most valiant of poets in the face of life. Nothing could beat down his invincible optimism. Through all the down-heartedness, the

low tone, the temper of question and doubt that mark the most serious English poetry of the last half of that century, his assurance rings out bold and inspiring. He was not ignorant of all the insistent questioning of his time upon the deepest themes. Nor did he turn away from it. Indeed, especially in his later life he liked to have a grapple with some unthrown question of the ages. There was a certain defiant quality in him always; he had the fighter's instinctive desire to try his mettle. In the face of whatsoever doubt he threw the challenge of a fearless faith. Like the hero in that wonderfully vivid and suggestive poem, *Childe Roland,* he could say:

> I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
> Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
> And blew.

I count it not the least of Robert Browning's services to humanity that he did so much to reinforce the spiritual confidence of his age, to hearten us with the high assurance that

> God's in his heaven—
> All's right with the world!

It was a part of his faith that whatsoever is dark and whatsoever hard in this world is only a necessary element of that discipline for which we are put here.

> This life is training and a passage—pass,

says the old Pope in *The Ring and the Book.* Aspiration, progress, this is the condition of healthy life. But were the present always fair, the prize always within our grasp, how should we aspire? We must have some unrest to push us on to better things,—

> This foot once planted on the goal,
> This glory-garland round my soul,
> Could I descry such? Try and test!
> . . . . . .
> Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?

Nay, we need not only beauty and love to beckon, but pain and fear to urge. And wisdom, too, how should we grow in that unless goaded by a painful sense of our own ignorance? The full day is ever beyond us; but yet a spark disturbs our clod. There must be more truth above us; doubt is only the rough road by which we climb unto it. "Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear"; but sorrow and doubt are only meant to sting us into that noble discontent that struggles and aspires. The sorrow greatly endured, the doubt valiantly overcome,—so we gain "those wrestling thews that throw the world."

> Rather I prize the doubt
> Low kinds exist without,
> Finished and finite clods, untroubled by a spark.
> . . . . . .
> Then, welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,
> Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand but go!
> Be our joys three-parts pain!
> Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
> Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

Only underneath such a heroic confidence as this there must be an unswerving faith in the permanence of our human personality, and in the existence of a loving God above us all. I must be assured that, whatever my failings and falls, my career is not to end in failure to-morrow; but that there is somewhere endless room for endless effort. And I must be assured that all this restless scheme of things is not the sport of chance, but rather under the direction of a Being who surpasses us in love as far as is wisdom. These two great essential truths, as revealed in Christianity, Browning held with unfaltering grasp all his days. The lines of attack and defense might change; the scientists might butt at *Genesis* as they did in the fifties and sixties; the German critics might hammer away at their historical criticism; he wasn't greatly concerned. Like his good Pope, he didn't much perplex him with "aught hard, dubious, in the transmitting of the tale."

"God and his own soul stood sure." At the close of that striking, if somewhat difficult, poem, *La Saisiaz,* speaking for once in his own person, in his fancy he longs for fame—fame in which might unite the powers of all those great men who once lived near the lake where he is writing,—the wit of Voltaire, the learning of Gibbon, the eloquence of Rousseau, Byron's "rainbow, tears"—and all for what? Why that men yet to be might say of him, "He there, . . . crowned by verse and prose, . . . he at least believed in soul, was very sure of God!"

For himself, he had always the buoyancy, the ardor that comes of limitless hope and desire. There's no undertone of sadness in him. No dim horizon shut down in front of him. More than any other English poet, he exemplifies the meaning of that wonderful phrase of Scripture, "the power of an endless life." Mr. Sharp tells us how in his later years he said to him: "Death! It is this harping on Death I despise so much, this idle and often cowardly as well as ignorant harping. . . . What fools who talk thus. Why, *amico mio,* you know as well as I that death is life. . . . Pshaw! It is foolish to argue upon such a thing even. . . . Never say of me that I am dead!"

He has his wish. We who learned to know the living Browning find it impossible ever to think him dead. And at the core of his fame will ever lie, I believe, this irrepressible power of personal life. In the next century men may not speak of him as the greatest English poet of his generation—it is too soon for us to be sure about that; they surely will not speak of him as the greatest artist in verse—that fame is Tennyson's; many of his works they will, I think, forget to read. But they will remember him as a genius of mass and power; as one of the subtlest explorers of the human heart, endowed with sinewy intellect, large imagination, capacity for enjoyment and appreciation of all forms of life, and with a gift of utterance that, if not often flowing nor always clear, had immense breadth, pungency, vigor. But they will think of him most of all, I believe, as the one poet who expressed the robust, unconquerable vigor of

faith and hope that underlay all the shifting doubt of his restless age, the spiritual hero and victor in the poetry of the mid-nineteenth century.

One poem, I think, will always link itself with special significance to his memory,—I mean his very last poem, which we did not read until after he was gone,—surely one of the most striking last poems ever poet wrote. The breath of larger life is in it. It is as if the whole poet had summed himself up in those noble words of hail and farewell:

At the midnight in the silence of the sleep-time,
  When you set your fancies free,
Will they pass to where—by death, fools think, imprisoned—
Low he lies who once so loved you, whom you loved so,
    —Pity me?

Oh to love so, be so loved, yet so mistaken!
  What had I on earth to do
With the slothful, with the mawkish, the unmanly?
Like the aimless, helpless, hopeless, did I drivel
    —Being—who?

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,
  Never doubted clouds would break,
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
    Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time
  Greet the unseen with a cheer!
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,
"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed,—fight on, fare ever
    There as here!"

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH

AMONG the most potent and beneficent influences in England during the decade from 1830 to 1840 were the teaching and example of Thomas Arnold, headmaster of Rugby School. The distinctively intellectual qualifications of Arnold for his work,—his scholarship, his executive capacity, his stimulating methods of instruction, his vivid historical imagination,—all these he himself considered subservient to the highest purpose of education: the formation of intelligent, independent moral character. His famous statement to his boys became the watchword of Rugby: "It is not necessary that this should be a school of three hundred, or even one hundred, or even of fifty boys; but it is necessary that it should be a school of Christian gentlemen." And such he made it. It was not so much that he taught religion; rather that all his teaching was religious. He was not prone to religious introspection. His whole cast of mind was not philosophical or speculative, but outward and practical. Impatient of our factitious distinctions between sacred and secular things, he thought and spoke of religion as duty and service rather than as belief, and as binding equally upon all the acts of life. It was inevitable that pupils who passed years under the training of such a teacher should imbibe much of his temper. "What I want to find in a boy," Arnold used to say, "is moral thoughtfulness." It soon came to be noticed that the boys of his sixth form had unusual maturity and strength of practical judgment, and an unusual sense of the moral quality of action. They had not been encouraged to think overmuch on the grounds of religious belief, or to be constantly interrogating their own inner experiences; on the contrary, they were interested beyond the wont of boys of their

years in the affairs of the world outside—political, historical—and they had become accustomed to measure all these affairs by ethical and religious standards. Accepting implicitly the great principles of Christian teaching, they applied those principles in healthy, outward fashion to conduct.

In 1837 there were two boys in Rugby who were to become poets, and whose poetry was to have a unique value as the best expression of an attitude of religious doubt and question characteristic of many thoughtful men about the middle of the nineteenth century. One of these boys was Dr. Arnold's son, Matthew, the other, three years his senior, was Arthur Hugh Clough. No pupil ever felt more deeply the influence of Arnold than did this young Arthur Clough. Not that there was anything priggish or morbid about him. He was not only the best scholar in his form, but the best goal-keeper in the football field and the best swimmer in the river; a buoyant, ambitious, healthy fellow. But there are passages in his early letters that show how thoroughly he had accepted Arnold's ideals, and how entirely he was governed by unselfish moral impulse. "I verily believe," he writes a friend, "my whole being is soaked through with the wishing and hoping and striving to do the school good." He is looking forward to entering one of the universities next year, and decides for Oxford partly because there is, he learns, a "high Arnold set that is just germinating at Balliol under the auspices of Stanley and Lake" (who had gone up the year before), but chiefly because he thinks he may do more good there. And the possibilities of Oxford for good or evil he thinks far greater than those of Cambridge. "Suppose," he exclaims, "suppose Oxford became truly good and truly wise!" With such ingenuous aspirations, Clough, in 1837, at the age of eighteen, went up to the university. But he had not been in Oxford a month before he found that the center of influence there was Oriel rather than Balliol. The religious tone of the university was decided, not by the Rugby set, but by that young fellow of Oriel who was preaching every Sunday afternoon in St.

Mary's Church. More than forty years after, Clough's friend, Matthew Arnold, told us of the charm that voice had for him:

> Who could resist the charm of that spiritual apparition, gliding in the dim afternoon light through the aisles of St. Mary's, rising into the pulpit, and then, in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with words and thoughts which were a religious music,—subtle, sweet, mournful?

It was clear that the spiritual forces of the place were swayed by this man, John Henry Newman, and the group of his immediate friends and disciples. No young man of thoughtful and reverent temper could escape their influence. As for Clough, he says that for two years he was like a straw drawn up a chimney. But—and here was the fatal danger—he could not help seeing that the teaching of these men was, in most respects, diametrically opposed to what he had learned at Rugby. They counseled obedience, and discouraged private opinion. They urged the authority of a church, and disparaged the sufficiency of Scripture. The whole force of their movement was directed to check those liberal tendencies in religion and politics of which Arnold was a representative. They thoroughly disliked Arnold; and Arnold, though some of them were his intimate friends,—Keble was godfather of his son Matthew,—yet felt with pain that it was impossible to maintain intimate relations with them. Clough tried for a while to keep out of what he calls "this vortex of philosophism and discussion"; but for so eager and inquisitive a mind as his that was impossible. Like many young men at that time, he came to question the validity of his religious beliefs while yet he could not assent to any churchly authority as a substitute for them. He had no sympathy with the attitude of confident denial,—it is probable that he never positively repudiated any article of his early faith,—but in the strain of conflicting opinions and tendencies he found all ground of religious certitude slipping away beneath him. His story thereafter is the record of a man who retains in a very high

degree the Christian temper, but can never, in a life-long struggle, quite recover the Christian creed. And his poetry, many readers will always hold, is the truest and most moving record in our language of such a struggle,—the struggle of a noble soul who, in spite of all his doubts and questions, never lost courage and hope, because really sustained by an underlying faith in a divine love and purpose at the heart of all this unintelligible world.

Clough was in Oxford eleven years. His attainments in scholarship were not, at first, quite what his remarkable record at Rugby had led his friends to expect. The tumult of opinion in which he found himself involved withdrew his attention too much from his studies and he missed one or two academic distinctions he had coveted. But in 1842 he was elected Fellow of Oriel College, and next year tutor. One thing is certain from the scanty records of those years,—young Clough was one of the most lovable of men. He was not likely, indeed, to attract a large circle of friends, partly on account of a certain shyness and reticence, especially upon all matters affecting his own experience, and partly from the utter frankness and honesty of a nature impatient of the conventionalities and half meanings of casual acquaintance; but those who did know him loved him. As one of his Oxford friends said, "He had a gift for making people personally fond of him; I can use no other word." He was a big, broad-shouldered, soft-hearted, utterly unselfish fellow. In one of his vacation tramps through the Scottish Highlands he chanced upon a heather-thatched hut wherein was a child lying sick of a fever, the father away, the mother without medicines or aid for her child, and nothing to be had nearer than Fort William, two days' journey away. Clough, without a moment's hesitation, tramped thither, got medicines and supplies, and returned in time to save the child,—four days' hard walk over a rough country for a child he had never seen, and whose parents did not even learn his name. And it was only by accident that any one ever heard of it. That was just like him.

Of his religious perplexities during his Oxford life Clough would seem to have said but little to his friends. They are recorded in the verses written in those years. In all his writing of that period there is no love of controversy, not a trace of the pride of opinion, or a touch of sarcasm for any honest belief which he cannot himself accept. This verse is rather a record of a search for truth, eager but reverent; often baffled but never impatient or disheartened. He has no liking for merely negative and destructive criticism. His attitude toward the beliefs he cannot accept is always that of question, not of denial; and he was ready to admit that others might have found truth where he could not discover it. In a letter written in 1847, speaking of some theories of the Atonement which he cannot understand, he adds: "I think others are more right who say boldly, 'We don't understand it, and therefore we won't fall down and worship it.' Though there is no occasion for adding 'There is nothing in it.' I should say, until I know, I will wait, and if I am not born with the power to discover, I will do what I can with what knowledge I have—trust to God's justice, and neither pretend to know, nor, without knowing, pretend to embrace; nor yet oppose those who by whatever means are increasing or trying to increase knowledge." In point of fact, his divergence from recognized standards of orthodoxy might not have given any compunction to a man of less sensitive conscience in his position; but Clough was the soul of honesty, and after 1845 he came to feel with increasing uneasiness that only with large latitude of interpretation could he make the subscription required of a fellow and tutor. Accordingly, in 1848, he resigned both positions and with very little notion of what next, threw himself upon the world.

In the same year he published his first long poem. Those people who expected to read in it a record of his spiritual history must have been much disappointed, for it contains nothing of the sort. *The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich,* as he called it, is well described in

its secondary title as a Long-Vacation Pastoral; it is the story of a reading party with their tutor in the Scottish Highlands. The *Bothie* seems to lie a little at one side of the main current of Clough's poetry; I do not think it his most characteristic work. Some critics, however, have called it his best; and it very possibly is the one by which he himself would have preferred to be judged. It represents the side of his nature in which he himself has most confidence. For we are not to think of Clough as giving himself up by choice to brooding introspection. He was always suspicious of that habit of mind, even when he could not escape from it. He coveted action, open and unreflecting enjoyment. There are people who seem to be born with eyes that open inward. They are forever on the watch to see how their inner experiences are going on, and live with one finger always on their spiritual pulse; and they seem to take a dubious kind of pleasure in this personal diagnosis. But Clough was not a man of that sort. He was, indeed, always liable to an over-questioning and hesitant temper; but he felt there was something morbid in such a temper, from which he strove to escape into a free outward life. He did not enjoy that kind of poor health. He was fearful lest the healthy glow of action should get sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. In literature he preferred the objective depiction of the outward life—books like Walter Scott's—to the analytical study of character and mood. A great admirer of Wordsworth, he yet thought Wordsworth over-reflective on trifling occasion. He used to say that such lines as

> To me the meanest flower that blows can give
> Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears

were unhealthy, because they implied a detachment from the larger interests of mankind. Accordingly, when he wrote his first long poem for publication, he turned aside from all the questionings that had beset him, and made his poem a breezy, open-air story. There is red blood and bracing weather in it; tramping, swimming, Highland piping and

dancing, and an uncommonly genuine bit of love story to end with. The poem is full of the rugged charm of wide, heathery moor, misty mountains, bright, cold streams. No poet since Scott has so well caught the atmosphere of the Highlands. And then—what is rather surprising in pastoral poetry—there are real people in the book. This group of college men, with their robust health and jolly, lazy vigor, their confident opinions on every subject under heaven, their merciless good-natured satire, their exuberant sentiment each man for himself, and their intolerance of sentiment in everybody else,—we have most of us known them, and very good fellows they be! Of the college men the foremost is one Philip Hewson, "radical, Chartist, eloquent speaker." Philip is enthusiastic and sentimental, qualities rather winning in youth when enthusiasm is in the blood and the sentiments are not yet soured. He breaks his heart one week over a ferryman's pretty daughter; mends it quite naturally the next over an earl's daughter, whom he vows to be noble enough to sacrifice a whole generation of hodmen for; and a fortnight later does really find his fate in the Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich. Bothie is Gaelic for a laborer's hut; and in the Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich,

> on the blank hillside looking down through the loch to the ocean
> There, with the runnel beside and pine trees twain before it,

lived David Mackaye and his daughter Elspie. Elspie is one of the living women of modern poetry. She is rustic enough to satisfy Philip's democratic views, but she isn't ignorant and she has a crisp originality really irresistible. Young Alfred Tennyson was writing idyls in those years, with some nice girls in them, doubtless; but after his Gardener's Daughters and Miller's Daughters, with "dainty, dainty waists," and "jewels at the ear," this Miss Elspie is most refreshingly real. Her canny prudence and deliberation, her Scottish tendency to turn over in her mind the proposal of her lover and to have a look at love "in the abstract"—it is all quite truthful and quite delightful. The

Bothie throughout is that rare thing, a modern pastoral without a touch of pretty unreality. Civilization is likely soon to make such poetry impossible. It is the kind one thinks that Clough would always have preferred to write, if he could. But, in fact, this active, unquestioning life, content with

> A few strong instincts and a few plain rules,

was never possible to him. He might admire it, but he could not live it. And thus the larger part of his verse, and the part which has the deepest life in it, comes from the skeptical part of his nature.

That term, "skeptical" is in bad odor; yet in strictness it implies no moral quality, but only an intellectual one. Minds like Clough find it hard to believe. They are always asking themselves hard questions, and they are not satisfied with anybody's answers. They cannot put up with merely probable conclusions and provisional belief. Most of us, if we find ourselves in doubt on any subject, strike a balance of probabilities, as well as we can, and act on the conclusion. We learn pretty early in life that we are not likely to attain a perfectly consistent body of opinions in any field of thought, and become shy of laying down any more general propositions than we are obliged to. We know that we don't know much, but we don't worry about it. It is not hypocrisy, we say, this attitude of ours, nor even moral indifference; but rather a healthy recognition of the limitations of knowledge. We must believe something—at all events assent to something—or we cannot get on. We must do it; that is the way the world is made.

But Clough could not live so. It seemed to him a kind of dishonesty. He is always protesting against that temper of acquiescence which puts by our obstinate questionings with answers we know are not quite correct, or gives easy acceptance to half-truths as a basis of action:

> O may we for assurance' sake,
> Some arbitrary judgment take,

> And wilfully pronounce it clear,
> For this or that 'tis we are here?
>
> Or is it right, and will it do,
> To pace the sad confusion through,
> And say: It doth not yet appear
> What we shall be, what we are here?

No man of his generation, I am persuaded, loved truth more intensely than Clough did; but precisely because he loved it so much he was always fearful that in his eagerness he might over-hastily accept something as truth that was not true. He knew that there is rest and a certain stability given to the mind by accepting steadily anything; and he was apprehensive of a temptation to believe merely from this motive. It seemed to him fatally easy to substitute a languid assent for a living faith, and thus to slide into a religion which is mere use and wont, and that that was fatal treachery to the soul. Whenever his verse has a satiric edge,—as it often has, for he was endowed with a humor keen as well as buoyant,—the object of his satire is usually that easy-going temper which accepts belief, and would accept with equal readiness disbelief, at the dictates of prudence or even of fashion; the good people, of whom, to say truth, there are too many in the world, who do not really fear God but are very much afraid of Mrs. Grundy.

The great World, in one of his poems, says of that story of the Christ whom once they slew:

> His wife and daughter must have where to pray,
> And whom to pray to, at the least one day
> In seven, and something sensible to say.
>
> Whether the fact so many years ago
> Had, or not, happened, how was he to know?
> Yet he had always heard that it was so.

Thus to substitute tradition for belief, the voice of form and convention for the convincing evidence of truth, this to Clough was the worst dishonesty,—dishonesty to one's own self. Another result of Clough's habit of insistent question was the paralysis it laid upon all efficient activity. And this

result was most painful to one naturally so eager and generous as he. It may be said that action must precede faith, and that indeed is true; but such a nature as Clough's finds itself forced to ask whether the belief that grows out of action is anything more than convenient assent to those conditions found essential to action. Have we a right to believe anything simply because we cannot act unless we do? As the doubter in one of his poems says,

> Action will furnish belief—but will that belief be the true one,
> This is the point, you know.

It is often said, also, that we must accept with such grace as we can the limitations of our knowledge and the impossibility of assured faith, and then, content with our ignorance, go on to do our duty. And Clough tried to say that too. That is the thought of one of the most beautiful of his shorter poems, *The Questioning Spirit:*

> The human spirits saw I on a day
> Sitting and looking each a different way;
> And hardly tasking, subtly questioning,
> Another spirit went around the ring
> To each and each: and as he ceased his say,
> Each after each, I heard them singly sing,
> Some querulously high, some softly, sadly low,
> We know not—what avails to know?
> We know not—wherefore need we know?
> This answer gave they still unto his suing,
> We know not, let us do as we are doing.
> Dost thou not know that those things only seem?
> I know not, let me dream my dream.
> Are dust and ashes fit to make a treasure?—
> I know not, let me take my pleasure.
> What shall avail the knowledge thou hast sought?—
> I know not, let me think my thought.
> . . . . . .
> And, when the rest were over past,
> I know not. I will do my duty, said the last.
> Thy duty do? rejoined the voice,
> Ah, do it, do it, and rejoice;
> But shalt thou then, when all is done,
> Enjoy a love, embrace a beauty

> Like these, that may be sought and won
> In life, whose course will then be run;
> Or wilt thou be where there is none?
> I know not, I will do my duty.

Beautiful, indeed, with a sad nobility of resolve, but quite hopeless. It is the agnostic theory of life; and it cannot give a satisfactory motive for action. For if we cannot tell why we should do our duty, if we do not know to whom it is due, we may soon find that duty itself comes to be nothing more than convention, and the spring of resolve breaks. So Clough felt. In a sequel to the poem just quoted he sees the human spirits once again, this time on the earth in woful case, waiting by some Bethesda for healing from the smitings of life. And with them now that one who spoke of duty once before,

> Foredone and sick and sadly muttering lay.
> 'I know not, I will do—what is it I would say?
> What was that word which once sufficed alone for all,
> Which now I seek in vain and never can recall?'
> And then, as weary of in vain renewing
> His question, thus his mournful thought pursuing,
> 'I know not, I must do as other men are doing.'

But when the human spirit can say only this it is surely worsted in the struggle of life. Clough, as I have said, felt it a fatal dishonesty to accept tradition or half-belief for belief; here, on the practical side, he felt it equally dishonest to accept mere convention for duty. This is the skeptic's dilemma. He must act without belief, or on belief only half supported by evidence; yet, if he does so act, his action soon degenerates into routine; while, if he declines to act, he lets occasion go by and wastes his days in querulous inefficiency.

All Clough's minor poems are the record of his struggle with this problem. In them all is the same candor, the same generosity, the same buoyant and active spirit checked by a mournful hesitation. They have the charm of entire sincerity and a certain appealing earnestness, and they have high poetic qualities as well.

For Clough had the native sensibility and the trained judgment of the artist. It is true that, in general, he seems too intent upon his meaning to delay long over his form; he likes the plain truth best. Yet in these lyrics of the inner life there is a melody and movement all the more effective because so unstudied, and an imagination that often sends a sudden ray into the subtlest recesses of feeling. And now and then we come upon one of them which shows that union of perfect grace with utter simplicity which is the last charm of lyric verse. The plaintive music of such a poem as *The Stream of Life* sings itself into the heart at once and forever.

Two longer poems, the *Dipsychus* and the *Amours de Voyage,* illustrate the same struggle to escape from the alternatives of convention on the one hand and inefficiency on the other. *Dipsychus* is a kind of everyday *Faust.* The hero (whose name means, I suppose, the man with two souls) is constantly haunted by a mocking spirit who tempts to submit to the inevitable, accept the half-belief and the conventional action, and do as other men are doing. This is Clough's devil. No grimy and vulgar specter, nor yet a handsome pander to the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, but only an elusive spiritual presence that steals behind our most earnest purpose with the well-bred persuasive whisper that we might as well adapt ourselves and make the best of life:

> The world is very odd we see,
> We do not comprehend it;
> But in one fact we all agree,
> God won't and we can't mend it.
>
> Being common sense, it can't be sin
> To take it as I find it;
> The pleasure, to take pleasure in;
> The pain, try not to mind it.

Nowhere in modern poetry, so far as I can recall, is there a more true and subtle depiction of that temper of worldliness which claims a monopoly of good sense, meets all

deep questioning with patronizing dissuasives, and confronts all ideals with an incredulous lift of the eyebrow. He seems not altogether evil, this Spirit of worldliness; he would only take things as they are and, as the eighteenth century preachers used to say, make the best of both worlds,—if there should chance to be a second. Nor is he without his own views on religious matters, though he keeps them mostly to himself. Lord Bolingbroke, when asked "What is your religion?" is said to have replied, "The religion of all gentlemen." "But what is that?" "That, sir, is what no gentleman ever tells." This Spirit is in like case. A decent conformity he is ready to approve,—

> You'll go to church of course, you know;
> . . . . . .
> Trust me, I make a point of that;
> No infidelity, that's flat!

But to moon about religion, to stand agape over some deep truth only half apprehended until you lose your grip upon fact, and lose the taste of life, this to the Spirit of this world is the crowning folly. Dipsychus longs for some clear knowledge by which one might, as in the olden days, walk with God; he longs for some clear end of action that may draw him beyond the fringes of the fight into the pell-mell of men, and give full course to all his powers. In some happier moments he does have transient glimpses of help that cometh from above; but with every better impulse slides in the fatal whisper of the Spirit to remind him of the limitations of life and counsel submission to the present and the positive:

> Submit, submit!
> 'Tis common sense, and human wit
> Can claim no higher name than it.

And thus Dipsychus oscillates between honest revolt and tame conformity, until, at last, the poem does not end, but merely stops; as if the poet felt that to such doubts there could be no final answer, from such solicitations no lasting relief.

The other of these two longer poems, the *Amours de Voyage,* is a study of skeptic inefficiency. The character of the hero is indicated in the motto Clough prefixed to the poem, *Il doutait de tout, même de l'amour.* He is a young Englishman who, for no reason in particular, finds himself in Rome, for the first time, during the year of its siege by the French.

> Rome disappoints me much; I hardly as yet understand, but
> *Rubbishy* seems the word that most exactly would suit it.

He is not quite certain whether he is interested or bored; but the place, at all events, holds him by a kind of indolent fascination. In a few weeks comes the siege, and he is tempted to join the patriotic defenders against the French invaders.

> Offer one's blood an oblation to Freedom, and die for the Cause.

But he cannot trust the impulse far enough to obey it. He is not sure that he is called on,

> Or would be justified even in taking away from the world that
> Precious creature, himself. Nature sent him here to abide here;
> . . . Nature wants him still, it is likely.

Meantime he meets an English girl, who is in Rome with friends during the siege, and falls into what would seem very much like love. For himself, however, he cannot quite be sure about that, either, or decide whether it is a case of love or only a case of juxtaposition:

> I am in love, meantime, you think; no doubt you would think so.
> I am in love, you say; with those letters, of course, you would say so.
> I am in love, you declare. I think not so; yet I grant you
> It is a pleasure indeed to converse with this girl. Oh, rare gift,
> Rare felicity, this! she can talk in a rational way, can
> Speak upon subjects that really are matters of mind and of thinking.
> . . . . . .
> No, though she talk, it is music; her fingers desert not the keys; 'tis
> Song, though you hear in the song the articulate vocables sounded,
> Syllabled singly and sweetly the words of melodious meaning.
> I am in love, you say: I do not think so, exactly.

He dallies and hesitates, fearing to take an irretraceable step merely at the dictates of accident or convention; and he vexes himself endlessly by reflection:

Hang this thinking at last! what good is it? Oh, and what evil!
Oh, what mischief and pain! like a clock in a sick man's chamber,
Ticking, and ticking, and still through each covert of slumber
pursuing.

If he had been left to himself long enough, however, he would probably have drifted into a proposal at last. It is the natural result of inertia in such cases. But a meddling relative of the lady ventures a word with him about his intentions and his duty, and that determines him—in the wrong way. It would surely be intolerable to be pushed reluctantly to the altar by a man who wants to be your brother-in-law. He flings out of Rome in a huff, and Miss Trevellyn goes to Florence. On reflection, however, it occurs to him that the lady may have known nothing of the ill-advised intervention of her friend; and as, moreover, his interest persists strangely after the lady has gone, he conjectures that there may have been something more than juxtaposition in it after all, and decides to follow her and find out. But a series of perverse accidents sets him off the track; he arrives in every place just a little after she has left it; and, at last, losing all clue to her whereabouts, he gives up the search with a kind of fatigue of will, and drops back to accept the inevitable:

The Fates, it is clear, are against us;
. . . . Indeed, should we meet, I could not be certain;
All might be changed, you know . . . . . .
Great is Fate, and is best. I believe in Providence partly.
What is ordained is right, and all that happens is ordered.
Ah, no, that isn't it. But yet I retain my conclusion.

It might be naturally supposed that there could be little interest in a poem concerned with the hesitancies of such a shilly-shallying young person as this. But there is a great deal of interest. For the persons in it, Mr. Claude, Miss Mary, and the sister, Georgina, are very real people.

Clough had the art to make you acquainted with ordinary folk; and it is never seen to better advantage than in the really vivid way he puts before us this lover who cannot pronounce on his own symptoms. Nor must it be thought that Mr. Claude is merely a pretty sentimentalist, trying to make up what he calls his mind. On the contrary, he has Clough's own keen penetration, ripe culture, large and observant sympathies. His talk abounds in most incisive comment upon men and things—art, politics, history, religion. Indeed, his indecision is due in part to this very breadth of view. There is some truth in the remark of the humorist, that one must have a great deal of mind when it takes so long to make it up. The poem is saturated, also, with Clough's peculiar humor. Clough was one of those men of whom you say that he might have done almost anything; I have often thought that there were the possibilities of an excellent satirist in him. Satire has made but a rather poor showing in English verse since the eighteenth century men overdid it; but such a poem as the *Amours de Voyage* gives a hint of what place there might be for it to-day. The first charm of the poem, however, and its real purpose, is the remarkable depiction of the hesitancy and ineptitude born of doubt. I have said that the *Dipsychus* might be called an everyday *Faust;* with even greater fitness might the *Amours de Voyage* be called an everyday *Hamlet.* Take out of Hamlet's story its large circumstance and its sanguinary catastrophe, and you change it from tragedy to satire; but you leave Hamlet unchanged. His fatal weakness may be shown as well in the drawing room as on the buskined stage. As Mr. Claude says,

> Ah, the key of our life that passes all wards, opens all locks,
> Is not, *I will,* but *I must.* I must,—I must,—and I do it!

The career of Clough was uneventful. After leaving Oxford he held, for a time, a position in the London University, where no religious tests were required, and then, in 1852, on the urgent invitation of Emerson, came over to America. He liked the atmosphere of intellectual freedom

he found in Cambridge and he won the intimate friendship of the group of scholars and poets there,—Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes, Hawthorne, Norton, Sumner, Agassiz. Lowell in his memorial poem, *Agassiz,* has left a loving portrait of the

> Boy face, but grave with answerless desires,
> Poet in all that poets have of best,
> But foiled with riddles dark and cloudy aims.

But he evidently missed somewhat the riper culture of the old world, and when, after eight months in Cambridge, he received the offer of a place in the Education Office, he accepted it and returned to England. This position he held until the close of his life. But his career was cut short by disease; he died, at the age of forty-two, in Florence, and his grave is in the little Protestant cemetery there, not far from that of Mrs. Browning. His life, one thinks, did not allow him space to show all the possibilities of his genius; and to the end he never gained that steadiness and certainty he craved. All his most characteristic poetry, as we have seen, either expresses directly his own personal struggle with doubt or depicts the benumbing effect of such doubt upon practical activity. But it is not a paradox to say that this poetry is healthful, often inspiring. For the motive underlying it all is Clough's unconquerable love and unwearied search for truth. In this respect his work is in striking contrast with that of his friend, Matthew Arnold. The two men were, indeed, in some essential characteristics each the complement of the other. Clough had a hesitating, deliberate intellect, underlaid by a volume of buoyant feeling; Arnold had a clear, decisive intellect, on a basis of rather languid feeling. Arnold never shared Clough's irrepressible force of spirit, Clough's incessant thirst for action, Clough's genial interest in men and women. Arnold had passed through much the same period of doubt and question as Clough, and his poetry is the record of it; but he had reached a very different outcome. To Arnold the temper of question and struggle, even after the truth, was

intolerable. He craved calm and lucidity of mind. His typical poetic mood is always one of serenity; mournful it may be, but unperturbed and self-contained. He cannot endure the doubts that harass and corrode; he faces his questions; he states them with poignant sincerity; he admits that he has no answer for them; but he will not abandon himself to them. Rather, with a sad Olympian serenity, he turns away from them all to the tranquil certainties of beauty and culture. He stilled his own questioning by turning all the supernatural elements of religion into metaphor, and made for himself what he thought was a kind of defecated Christianity; a kind, however, which could hardly have satisfied or convinced any rational human being. But Clough would never thus put aside his questions, or sink back into the temper of acquiescence. He was loyal to the demands of his own better nature; obedient to his own deepest sense of spiritual need. Though the truth seemed beyond his ken, he would never abandon the quest; least of all would he refuse to believe there is truth. Few nobler lines were ever written than the couplet from one of his lyrics,

> It fortifies my soul to know
> That, though I perish, Truth is so.

It is this undaunted belief in high things yet unproved that makes his verse, in spite of its doubt, healthy and inspiring. Surely it is nobler thus to wrestle till the morning, though folded in mystery and goaded by pain, than to give up the struggle in placid indifference. Such a striving soul can never really know defeat, but finds still in its darkest midnight some assurance of victory and light. Clough's last poem,[1] written on his deathbed, breathes the spirit of his whole life and has poured new courage into thousands of fainting hearts:

> Say not the struggle nought availeth,
> The labour and the wounds are vain,
> The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
> And as things have been they remain.

[1] Dated 1849; see *Prose Remains,* London, 1888, p. 55, or his wife's Memoir, *Poems and Prose Remains,* London, 1869, I, p. 53. [L. B. G.]

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
  It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
  And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
  Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
  Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
  When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front, the sun climbs slow, how slowly!
  But westward, look, the land is bright.

A NEW ENGLAND MYSTIC

IN this age of tumult, when so many old ideals are shattered and so many new ones proved false or futile, it is probable that there may be but little interest in the work of an obscure New England thinker of the nineteenth century. Yet the impartial critic will sometimes look backward with a certain regret to that older day, between 1830 and 1880, and admit that he finds then more original thinking and more good writing than in any other similar period in our literary history. Among the group of thinkers who made those years memorable a distinctive position must be accorded to Bronson Alcott; he was preëminently our New England mystic.

Mysticism is foreign to our practical American temper. We demand that our knowledge shall be clear and definite. Some profound and familiar truths, indeed, we accept on their own evidence, confessing that they are not susceptible of clear statement before the understanding. We know that we only disguise our own ignorance in such words as "force," "being," "spirit." But we are content to use them without clear definition and are impatient of any attempt to fathom their meaning by any process of introspection. The mystic, on the contrary, cannot rest satisfied with the admission that such transcendental truths are beyond the grasp of our intellect; to him they seem precisely the kind of truths best worth knowing. He is constantly striving after some higher mode of knowledge, some spiritual apprehension, something which he may experience though he cannot express. He often finds his highest satisfaction in a mental state that transcends pure intellectual apprehension, and delights, like old Sir Thomas Browne, to lose himself in mystery and pursue his reason to an *O Altitudo!*

This was certainly true of Alcott. He was obsessed by one or two great truths and spent his life trying to utter them. He talked like an oracle, talked endlessly, and his listeners felt for the hour as if in the power of some strange inspiration. And the better the listener, the more potent this influence upon him. Yet he never was able to reduce this high Delphic talk to plain statement in print. "Alcott has," said Emerson, "the greatest passion both of mind and temper in his discourse; but when the conversation is ended, all is over." Other thinkers, like Coleridge, have influenced their contemporaries, as Alcott did, mostly by personal interviews and conversation; but Coleridge, though he never elaborated any philosophical system, did leave a body of writings from which set consistent opinions, philosophical, religious, and critical, may readily be educed. When you look to-day for Alcott's works, however, you find only three or four thin volumes, like the *Tablets* and *Table Talk,* made up of gnomic sentences and paragraphs without much system or connection. It is perhaps less surprising that he should have found difficulty in the attempt to apply his ideas in practice; yet it was the dream of some of his best years to do just that. It is the purpose of this paper to give a brief account of his two principal attempts, with some indication of the philosophic principles that prompted them and the results he hoped to attain by them.

Although he was to be the most transcendental of New English transcendentalists, Alcott was not one of the New England Brahmin type. His birthplace was the rural Connecticut town of Wolcott; his father was a small farmer; his mental training, for several years after graduating from the cross-roads country schoolhouse, was mostly gained while working in Mr. Hoadley's clock factory or peddling tinware in Virginia. But he managed to read a good deal and to think more, and he early began to show his remarkable power of conversation. Several hospitable Virginia gentlemen found him no ordinary peddler, and welcomed him to homes of culture where he found good books and good talk. During the last of five annual visits to the

South he passed some months among people of a yet different type, the Quakers of North Carolina. Here he read, during a long illness, the writings of Penn and George Fox, Barclay's *Apology,* Law's *Serious Call,* all of which strengthened and fixed the mystical tendency in his thinking.

It was two years later that he found his career. He taught for a little time in the public schools of Bristol and Wolcott, and in the fall of 1825 he opened in the adjoining town of Cheshire a school of his own. The most characteristic work of his life had begun; he was really a teacher the rest of his days. At first this Cheshire School differed little from the ordinary Connecticut common school of the period, but Alcott's ideals of the purpose and methods of education were already taking shape, and he at once began to embody them in his school. Two great principles decided all his teaching: first, that the moral culture of the pupil ought always to accompany his intellectual training; second, that all education should mean the bringing out of the native capacity of the child, or, to use Alcott's own phrase, "the production and exercise of original thought." The child is educated not by what is imparted from without to his merely receptive mind, rather by what he learns for himself and from himself. In accordance with these principles the teaching in the Cheshire School took the form of suggestive and interesting conversation; the curiosity of the pupil was constantly stimulated; he was taught to define for himself the meaning of all words he used or found in his reading, and to find out facts and truths—especially truths—for himself. A small well-chosen library was placed at his disposal. Some of the books were beyond the full appreciation of children, but it was a part of Alcott's plan always to make the child's mind look up. In the government of the school special effort was made to develop the child's sense of personal responsibility and the power of moral judgment. Two superintendents were appointed, at intervals, from the pupils themselves, whose duty it was to oversee the schoolroom, record all misdemeanors, and sometimes to take charge of the room in the absence of the teacher.

The Cheshire School soon attracted the favorable attention of educators not only in Connecticut but in adjoining states. The *Boston Recorder,* at that time the most influential paper in Boston, in the summer of 1827 quoted a Connecticut writer as saying that Mr. Alcott's school in Cheshire was "the best common school in this State, perhaps in the United States." A Society for the Improvement of Common Schools at its annual meeting, in Hartford, in 1827, elected Alcott to membership, and appointed a committee to examine the principles and methods of the new school. But while there were flattering notices from educational experts there was growing dissatisfaction at home. It is not easy to introduce new ideas into an old community. Plain Cheshire folk probably looked with some suspicion upon such a departure from their traditional conception of what a schoolmaster ought to do and thought the new sort of education their children were getting a doubtful substitute for practical drill in the three R's, enforced upon stupidity or laziness by the occasional use of the birch. Whatever the causes, confidence in the school declined. The number of pupils fell from eighty to thirty, and after about two years of trial, Alcott gave it up.

But he had by no means abandoned his educational ideals. His story for the next half dozen years is the record of various not very successful attempts to put them into practice, and in 1834 he opened the famous Temple School, which must always be associated with his name. Several years earlier he had made his first extended stay in Boston and gained the friendship of Emerson and Channing. One day in the summer of 1828 he writes in his journal, with fine enthusiasm, after listening to a sermon by Channing: "There is a city in our world upon which the light of the sun of righteousness has risen—a sun which beams in its full meridian splendor there. . . . It is the city that is set on high; it cannot be hid. It is Boston, whose morality is of a purer and more elevated kind than that of any city in America. Channing is its moral teacher." It was to Boston, then, that Alcott, after two rather discouraging

attempts in Philadelphia, resolved to return for his last great experiment as a schoolmaster. His plan had the support of a number of eminent friends, Channing, Emerson, Mrs. Elizabeth Hoar, Mrs. Lydia Maria Child, Miss Bliss,—afterward Mrs. George Bancroft,—and the Peabody sisters,—one of whom afterward married Nathaniel Hawthorne, and another, Horace Mann. The third sister, Miss Elizabeth, was Alcott's personal assistant in the school. He secured a commodious room in the Masonic Temple, and opened the famous Temple School in September, 1834, with thirty pupils from three to twelve years of age.

That time was the beginning of a new era in New England thought. The most prominent figure in Boston just then, as Alcott saw, was William Ellery Channing. Though a Unitarian in theology, Channing was a transcendentalist in philosophy,—our first transcendentalist, as a recent writer has called him; "our bishop" was Emerson's phrase. Two years before, in 1832, Emerson had definitely left the Unitarian pulpit, and two years later, 1836, he published *Nature,* the first great epoch-making deliverance of the new spiritual philosophy. In the same year was held the first meeting of the little group of thinkers, Emerson, Hedge, Freeman Clarke, Ripley, and Alcott, who, with wide differences of individual opinion, were so far agreed upon the supreme importance of the truths that transcend mere intellectual apprehension that they could not repudiate the name applied to them, The Transcendental Club. Within two or three years more some dozen others were more or less closely associated with them,—Theodore Parker, Orestes Bronson, Jones Very, Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, and in 1840 the movement had an organ, *The Dial,* edited by Ripley and Margaret Fuller. Alcott was at once recognized as in some respects the most prominent figure of the group. It is probably true, indeed, that he gave inspiration to the movement rather than any clear guidance or teaching. He had not read very deeply in the new German philosophy of Kant, Jacobi, and Fichte, which at that time was just be-

ginning to filter into New England thought largely through the influence of Coleridge; his teachers were rather the Greeks,—Plato, Pythagoras, and especially Plotinus, whom he read in Taylor's translation. For English philosophy he never cared much, save for the work of some of the Cambridge Neo-Platonists, like Henry More,—whom he greatly resembled,—and for Coleridge. It was not until later that he became interested in the German mystics, like Jacob Boehme. But, first and last, his reading seemed to intensify the few convictions he held to be primary and fundamental, rather than to broaden and systematize his thinking. Margaret Fuller said of him once,—"Alcott has only a few thoughts; I could count them all." And a hostile critic in a Boston paper pronounced his series of Orphic sayings in *The Dial* to be mere repetitions, "a train of cars with only one passenger." All his thinking centered about the two questions, "What am I?" and "Whence am I?" and he did not always see the difficulties and doubts that beset those questions. To the first he had a clear and positive answer: I am Spirit, a person that thinks and loves, and wills, entirely distinct from, and separable from, this "machine which is to me," as Hamlet says. So much we know; though, so far as I can see, he did not go quite so far as Berkeley in denying substantial reality to body. To the question, "Whence?" his answer was equally positive, but not equally clear. He could not conceive of the human spirit as really beginning at birth any more than as perishing at death. Some form of preëxistence is implied in the very idea of spirit. Yet he would not dogmatize on the subject, or commit himself either to any Oriental schemes of transmigration or to the fantastic assertions of the mystics. He only held that what we know as our spirit must in some sense come from the Universal and Absolute Spirit we call God. Such a change and union with a material body would seem in some sense to be a descent; he often called it, borrowing the term from Plotinus, "genesis by lapse." This notion of the origin of personality was at the foundation of Alcott's theory of education. If our spirit came from the absolute

and perfect Spirit, it would seem that it must have, at least in some potential form, traces of the perfection of its original. "To conceive," said Alcott, "a child's acquirements as originating in nature, dating from his birth into his body, seems an atheism that only a shallow material theology would entertain." He held that the familiar passage in Wordsworth's *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* is not only noble poetry but the truest philosophy. It was with this conviction that he opened the Temple School.

Here, even more than in the earlier Cheshire School, it was Alcott's effort to bring out the native content of the child mind. The attention of the pupils was fixed not so much upon things as upon thoughts. In the two afternoon hours the older scholars were given a little elementary Latin and practical arithmetic, but all the forenoon hours were occupied with "conversations" intended to educe the original, untutored ideas of the children. Sometimes Alcott would give out lists of simple words to be spelled, or would spell them himself to make sure the children recognized the words, and would then require the children to define them, not giving any formal dictionary meaning, but stating as well as they could what the words stood for in their own thought. Different statements of meaning were compared; sometimes, when the pupil merely repeated some other word, he could be shown that he had at the moment no definite thought in his mind. The words were sometimes names of sensible qualities often used figuratively of moral qualities or actions, as "black," for example; then the questioning would bring out the native sense of moral analogy in the pupil, at the same time directly cultivating his imagination. The words were always short and familiar: but usually the most familiar words are the most profound,—names for what everybody knows and nobody can tell. It was precisely Alcott's theory that such primal conceptions as "mind," "spirit," "know," "feel," "good," "bad," all lie potentially clear in the child mind, and that he should be taught to recognize them, name them, and perceive their relations to conduct. The hours of every Wednesday fore-

noon were given to "Conversations on Spirit as Displayed in the Life of Christ." He chose the life of Jesus, partly because his life and sayings are familiar and accessible to every one, and partly because he claimed—as Channing did—that, whatever your theological views of Jesus, you will admit that He retained through all his life on earth and exhibited in all his actions those primal spiritual truths coming from God that are—as He said—revealed unto babes, but are too often beclouded by what is deemed the wisdom and prudence of maturer years. In 1835 Miss Elizabeth Peabody, Alcott's assistant, published with his consent a full account of the school, explaining its purpose and methods, and giving as near as possible a verbatim report of some of its most interesting exercises. This book, now seldom seen, is a classic in the history of education. Doubtless many readers of Miss Peabody's book will say of Alcott's teaching that he was trying to make children think upon themes inaccessible to the thought of childhood,—the nature of spirit, the conception of God, the ultimate ground of duty, the rank of our emotions; in a word, that he was trying to make mystics of lads and lasses not yet in their teens. In reply to such criticism Alcott always reaffirmed his central principle of the primitive perceptions of childhood. As Emerson put it, he was trying to send children back upon themselves for the answer to every question of a moral character; to show them something holy in their own consciousness. To some of his critics he might also have retorted that his procedure was wiser than that of the Christian people who merely teach young people in their catechism, and thus secure an idle assent to statements corresponding to nothing in the child's mind,—the surest way to produce indifference or hypocrisy. It cannot be denied, however, that in some of his attempts to secure from young children the analysis of their thought or feeling he imposed too far upon the natural and healthy reserve of the child mind; especially when his questioning touched the emotions or affections. It is certain that such a school could not be a model for general imitation; for not

one man in ten thousand would be competent to conduct it.

In fact the Temple School soon had to meet adverse criticism. Many parents began to think their children should be learning a little more Latin rather than puzzling their brains over juvenile psychology. Even some of his friends thought Mr. Alcott too visionary for a practical schoolmaster. The first pronounced and public attack grew out of his Wednesday morning conversations, which, for some time, he had been continuing on Sunday forenoons. In 1836 and 1837 he published some of them, in two volumes, as reported by Miss Peabody, under the title, *Conversations with Children on the Gospels*. The critics who previously had known little or nothing about Mr. Alcott's work woke up to find that he had been teaching in his school some very dangerous philosophy and religion. The orthodox people who believed in the sturdy doctrine of the condition of every man wherein by nature he is inclined to only evil, "and that continually," found a very dangerous heresy in Alcott's first principles of education; and many who could hardly be accounted orthodox felt that the life and teaching of Jesus had been rather too freely used to support the freakish psychology of Mr. Bronson Alcott. The public press joined in the outcry, one paper quoting the verdict of a Harvard professor that "one third of Mr. Alcott's book was absurd, one third was blasphemous, and one third was obscene." "Such" remarked the editor, "will be the deliberate opinion of those who diligently read and soberly reflect." The same paper, on another date, suggested that this teacher should be brought before the "honorable judge of our municipal court." Alcott himself probably never had any intention of supporting or denying any particular doctrine of the person of Jesus; he was only drawing from his life such lessons as members of any denomination must find in his humanity. But the controversy ruined the school. He had opened in 1834 with thirty pupils and the number had risen at one time to forty, but before the end of 1837 it had fallen

to ten. The end came next year in a characteristic way. He had admitted to his school a colored girl. This was too much for the respectable citizens of Boston, who, a few years before, had dragged Garrison through their streets with a halter around his neck. They protested; and as Alcott angrily refused to alter his ways, they took their children out; it was insufferable that the spirit of Jesus should be illustrated in the psychology of a negress! Mr. Alcott found his school reduced to his own three daughters, one other white child, and the colored girl, and he shut up the doors. It was in June, 1839.

The whole story is an interesting chapter in the history of education. While no one nowadays would approve Mr. Alcott's extreme introspective methods, there can be no question that his school had considerable influence upon the development of common school education in Massachusetts. It is significant that Miss Peabody's sister, Miss Mary Peabody, afterward Mrs. Horace Mann, was so prominent in the discussions on common school education for the next twenty years. Mr. W. T. Harris, the warm admirer of Alcott and the best expositor of Alcott's philosophy, was superintendent of schools in St. Louis, president of the National Educational Association, and for many years chairman of the Boston Schoolmasters' Club.

In the next half dozen years there is little of external incident to record in the life of Alcott. After the failure of his school he removed to Concord to be near his friends, Emerson, Thoreau, and the Ripley and Hoar families. He rented a house with an acre of ground and pleased himself with thinking that he might now support his family in simple independence upon his own acre; but farming proved less interesting than philosophy, and no more lucrative. He was impatient of inactivity and seemed passing into a pronounced individualism, doubting the value of almost every established institution. In 1842 he refused to pay his town tax on the ground that he could not support a government not based upon the law of love. Emerson tried to persuade him to put his philosophic notions into

print, but he would not write. It was not until the spring of 1843 that he found opportunity to make another famous experiment, this time by founding not a school but a community.

The story of the Temple School had got over to England and excited so much interest among a small group of educators there that they entered into correspondence with Mr. Alcott and named for him a school they were establishing near London, Alcott House. From them came an urgent invitation that the Boston philosopher should visit England to give them the benefit of his experience. Emerson and a few friends quietly furnished the means for his passage, and in May, 1842, Alcott sailed for England, "with ten sovereigns in his red pocketbook," says Mr. Sanborn, "and a bill of twenty pounds on Baring Brothers." He was in England through the summer, holding high converse with his new friends on all topics; and his enthusiasm was so contagious and convincing that when he came back to Concord in October he brought with him three of them,—a Mr. Charles Lane and his son and a Mr. Wright,—with a scheme for what they called a New Eden, to be planted in a region more hospitable than England. They talked endlessly through the winter. In the spring Mr. Lane, who fortunately had one thousand pounds to venture in the enterprise, bought a little farmhouse with some acres of picturesque but not very fertile land, and in June the colonists moved in. Besides Alcott and his three friends there were Mrs. Alcott and her four girls, and within two or three weeks eight other members had joined the little community. There were never at any one time more than a dozen members besides the Alcott family. The farm was located in the town of Harvard, about thirty miles from Boston; they gave it the attractive name of Fruitlands.

It is difficult for one carrying a fair amount of common sense to appreciate the purposes and hopes of the Fruitlands enthusiasts. The best account of the plan is given by Louisa Alcott in her half-humorous story, *Transcendental Wild Oats*. They did not plan a large community; their

ideal was rather that of a large family. Unlike the more famous Brook Farm association, organized two years before, Fruitlands was not to be a socialistic experiment, with certain romantic and idyllic attractions; it was rather almost monastic in plan and methods. Alcott and Lane hoped, by abandoning the selfish motives which govern an artificial society, by the discipline of manual labor combined with moral studies, by the exclusion of everything that might suggest bodily indulgence, to attain soundness of judgment and clear spiritual vision. They refused animal food, not only because they held we have no right to destroy life, but also because it is repulsive and degrading to eat a dead animal. Even milk and eggs were forbidden,—the milk belonged to the calf, the eggs contained the promise and potency of future life. Their food was to be fruits, grains, and vegetables, and of the latter they preferred those that grow upward into the air, not downward into the ground. The ground itself was to be fertilized, not with manure, which, said Mr. Alcott, is filthy in idea and practice, a base, corrupting, and unjust mode of forcing nature, but by turning under growing crops,—a method obviously impracticable the first year. The reformers objected to employing enforced labor, either of man or beast, and at first proposed to prepare the land for planting solely with the spade; but as that was found to be too laborious, as well as too slow for the season that had well begun, a farmer from a neighboring town, who was a kind of half-way convert, was asked to come over with his oxen—really, one ox yoked with a cow —and plow the land for sowing. Ample provision was made for intellectual culture. Mr. Alcott had brought over from England a pretty large library of mystic philosophy and theology, and certain hours every day were to be given to reading and meditation, accompanied by discussion and conversations in which Alcott was, of course, the leader. There are certain indications, indeed, that Lane, who was inclined to be despotic, occasionally intimated that more manual and less spiritual assistance would be welcome.

The family was to be open to all who evinced spiritual

sympathy with its purposes, but there were no additions after the first month. Some of the brotherhood were very odd characters. One of them had once been in a madhouse and was pronounced by Lane "still not a spiritual being, at least not consciously and wishfully so." Another, one Samuel Brown, convinced that most of the ills of life are due to the enervating effects of clothing, troubled the family and scandalized the neighborhood by casting off the linen tunic which was the family uniform, and walking over the hillsides at night in almost Adamic simplicity. As the season advanced, Lane and Alcott, troubled to find that some of the family were leaving and no new ones were taking their places, made a trip to New York in search of recruits, but they got none. "The number of really living persons among the three hundred thousand inhabitants of New York," said Lane, "is very small." So long as summer lasted, and there seemed a prospect of securing sustenance from the kindly fruits of the earth, life at Fruitlands went on in a high and hopeful calm. Alcott especially, as his daughter says, "simply revelled in the Newness, fully believing that his dream was to be beautifully realized, and in time not only little Fruitlands, but the whole earth be turned into a Happy Valley." Perhaps the only skeptic of the group was Mrs. Alcott, the real martyr of Fruitlands. But as cold weather came on, the sky changed. The crops, carelessly planted and ignorantly tended, seemed likely to fail altogether. The community had no money and no credit. One after another the members left, until, by New Year's, only Lane and his son were left. Lane himself now began to blame Mrs. Alcott for lack of confidence in higher things, and blamed Alcott for weakly listening to his wife. That blame was unjust, for Alcott never consented to give up his scheme. Finally, when even Lane and his son had deserted to a Shaker community in an adjoining town, Alcott in despair shut himself up in his room and faced the end. For days he would neither eat nor drink, while his faithful wife watched by his side. At last, one night, too feeble to rise, he consented to take food, and

next morning, in the chill of a January day, the reformer and his family rode on an ox-sled to a hospitable house nearby where they remained until they could get back to Concord. Lane, anxious to recover at least part of the money he had put into Fruitlands, sold the farm and returned to England. The New Eden had lasted only about seven months.

The remainder of Alcott's career was without striking incident, though it was not half over. In Concord he came to know, as he had never known before, the charm of home and friends. Emerson, and Hawthorne, and Thoreau, and Ellery Channing were his near neighbors; Freeman Clarke, and George William Curtis and his brother Burrill, were frequent visitors. In such companionship he lived five years, reading, thinking, talking endlessly, but, except for a few articles in *The Dial,* writing nothing. He would seem to have had no clearly visible means of support; and, probably for that reason, in 1848 he went back to Boston, where Mrs. Alcott found employment in a benevolent society and the daughters began to teach. For two or three winters, following the example of Emerson, he gave public lectures, or, as he preferred to call them, "conversations," in a number of Western cities, which were often well attended, and proved of considerable financial assistance. But in the summer of 1857 the family were back again in Concord, where they belonged. The remaining twenty-five years of his life were passed in a high serenity among his old friends. He published two or three little books made up of scraps of his reflections, but the most fortunate work of his later years was the founding of the Concord Summer School of Philosophy, which gave a permanent opportunity for that platonic form of instruction in which he always delighted. He died in 1888.

It is not easy to-day to form any accurate estimate of Alcott's influence. If he had any consistent scheme of philosophical opinions he never put it into print. To most of his contemporaries he seemed a curious visionary, with no hold on practical life, obsessed by one or two ideas that he

could not express and probably did not himself very clearly understand. His daughter Louisa evidently had him in mind when she said that her idea of a philosopher was a man up in a balloon with his family tugging at the ropes to keep him down. Even his admirers were forced to admit that his talk seemed sometimes sheer inspiration without definite intellectual content, and now and then voted him,—as Emerson, in a fit of impatience, once did,—"a tedious archangel." Yet we must remember that some of the best minds in New England spoke in what seemed extravagant terms of this man and of their obligation to him. And the few ideas which he was always trying to enforce are just those ideas that, in the material progress of the last seventy-five years, our American thought has most needed to remember. He renders no small service to mankind who can assert with high and convincing confidence the one great central truth: that we are spirit. After all, whatever else they may have said or written, that is the one great teaching of the leaders in English philosophy and literature for the last century,—Coleridge, Carlyle, Emerson, Browning. Alcott, whatever his limitations, belonged to their class; rendered that service.

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